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Emotion, Intellect and  
Spirituality

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ANNIE BESANT

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## Emotion, Intellect & Spirituality

THERE is so much confusion of thought with regard to the meaning of the three stages of consciousness which I have described under the names Emotion, Intellect and Spirituality, that I think we shall not waste our hour this evening if we devote it to the consideration of these stages of consciousness, trying to define them accurately and to understand exactly what is meant by the name which is given to each. And it is not only that by this study we shall, perhaps, somewhat clarify our ideas, but also we shall find that answers present themselves to certain rather curious problems that appear in human life from time to time, problems that are puzzling in their nature and that give rise to a good deal of bewildered questioning. We find people, for instance, asking why it is that we sometimes see an apparently fundamental change take place in a person within the limits of a single incarnation, and why someone who looks by no means hopeful during the earlier stages of his life should

perhaps evolve very rapidly during the last half of his incarnation. Then, again, another question that sometimes arises is: Why is it that people who in many ways do not seem to be qualified, show none the less certain signs of spiritual growth? What is there in their nature which enables them to acquire certain spiritual faculties, when, looking at them from the purely external standpoint, they would not seem to be sufficiently evolved to show forth these qualities? Why is it, as I have often heard people say, that you can sometimes obtain better and wiser advice from a person in whom the higher intellect is not largely developed, but who shows very strongly the qualities of compassion, benevolence and sympathy, than from an intellect far more highly trained, than from a well-developed mind?

Now if these stages of consciousness are not understood, we are apt to answer such questions in a very mistaken fashion; and in a fashion, moreover, that is not only mistaken in itself, but is also likely to give rise to certain serious mistakes in conduct, certain grave blunders in our attempts to forward our own evolution. Thus we find people sometimes mistaking abounding emotion for spirituality, sometimes confusing the mere surging up of feeling with the strong potencies that come down from the spiritual world; and it is partly in order that we may avoid those

blunders, that I am going to ask you to follow me this evening in a somewhat careful analysis of these stages of consciousness, bringing them under the light of that Theosophical teaching which has illuminated for many of us so many problems in the past, and which illuminates so many new problems now.

If we look at the question from the ordinary standpoint of western psychology we find in our text-books the very familiar division of the mind into emotion, intellect and will. When we come to look a little more closely into this classification, we find that under the heading emotion sub-classes are made: first, "sensations," simple, primitive in their character, lying at the root of all further manifestation of consciousness, sensations which are the response of the organism to stimuli, to something that touches it from without. Then we have "feelings," which are said to arise from the grouping and co-ordination of these primitive sensations, complex in their nature—sometimes exceedingly complex—but none the less traced down to these simple sensations, which, grouped together according to their nature, gradually produce that which is recognised as feeling; so that under this heading emotion we have the two sub-classes of sensations and feelings.

Now if we consider for a moment the five planes of the universe on which, according to

the Theosophical teachings, our human evolution is proceeding at the present time—the physical, the astral, the mental or mānasic, the buddhic and the nirvāṇic—if we consider for a moment those five planes, we shall see that they seem to arrange themselves in a very definite order. With regard to the nirvāṇic plane we need say practically nothing to-night, for although that be the higher region of the spiritual universe it can scarcely come into our consideration at the present stage of evolution. The nirvāṇic and the buddhic planes together we class under the heading spiritual. All their forces would be spiritual forces, all consciousness working in them would be a consciousness spiritual in its nature, spiritual Beings would have there their habitat. If, then, omitting also for the moment the mental region, we look at the two lower planes—the astral and the physical—we find that these may be classed together as phenomenal. In these phenomenal worlds evolution takes place with regard to the astral body, the etheric double and the dense physical. These three bodies belong, of course, to the astral and the physical planes, which are capable of being classed together as phenomenal, just as the two higher planes are classed together as spiritual. They are essentially the worlds of phenomena, the worlds of concrete objects, the worlds in which

forms are found with all their limitations ; whereas the two higher are worlds which to the lower scrutiny are formless, in which the life is continually manifesting itself and moulding the subtle matter of those planes into immediate expression of itself. So that the great characteristic of the two higher regions is the manifestation of life, the great characteristic of the two lower the manifestation of form. Thus we may classify them in these pairs as phenomenal and spiritual.

When we come to deal with the mental world, the mānasic, we find that it partakes of the characteristics of those regions above and of those below, or, if we prefer to say so, of the inner and the outer. The lower half of the mental plane shows the distinct mark of the phenomenal worlds, the rūpa levels or the levels of form. And we notice that its phase of consciousness is that of the intellect, whose ideas are drawn from the phenomenal world and which takes sensations and feelings from that world below it, co-ordinates them, groups them together, draws its own conclusions from them, the whole of that work going on on the lower mental plane, that which we speak of as the levels of form or rūpa. Those levels, then, are distinctly related to the two lower worlds. But when we pass on to the higher, the upper half of the mental, we find that the intellect takes

on the characteristics which belong to the higher regions or spiritual world. It is abstract, not concrete, in its character ; it deals with ideas which from the standpoint of the concrete intellect are formless, those ideas that have the peculiar characteristic of existing in their own world as things perfectly intelligible, perfectly distinct, perfectly clear as seen by the intuition of manas, but that none the less, the moment they pass on to the lower level of the mental plane, are found not to be one but many in every case—one abstract idea belonging to the formless world giving birth perhaps to hundreds of concrete ideas, each one distinct with its own characteristic form. So that, looked at in this way, we see that the mental plane seems to divide itself into this dual relationship to the worlds above it and the worlds below. Consciousness working thereon shows out these two great characteristics—the concrete dealing with the phenomenal, and the abstract reaching upwards toward the spiritual. This plane is essentially the human plane, it is the great battle-ground of humanity ; none of the combats that take place on the physical or the astral planes are to be compared in their intensity, in their importance, in their subtlety, with the combats that are waged on the mental plane. It is the plane of balance, the plane having two below

it and two above it, the central plane for humanity, and in that sense the most important and the most characteristic in human evolution. It is there that the "I" develops, the root and the centre of individuality; hence it is that on this plane all the most terrible combats are waged. It is the place where success or failure comes to humanity in the course of our world-evolution.

Now looking at the whole question in that rather wide way, trying to take, as it were, a bird's-eye view of these planes on which human evolution is proceeding, we shall find, I think, that the question of consciousness will become very much easier to grasp. If we would understand the consciousness which is working on these planes, we must note the characteristics of each plane, and these will in turn be characteristics of the consciousness in its activity on any given plane; and the more we are able to recognise each of these planes as separate from the others, as having its own place in evolution, the more shall we be able to understand the workings of consciousness on each, the attributes which it will necessarily develop, the characteristics which it will inevitably show. And if we can work these out fairly, clearly and definitely, we shall not run into the danger of confusion into which I notice so many of our students do run, sometimes thinking that the

emotional is the spiritual, and utterly misunderstanding the place of the mental in the total evolution of man.

There is one thing that we shall have to consider when we are dealing with consciousness, which does not at once come out clearly and plainly in this broad view that I have been taking. There is a kind of border-land between the astral and the mental planes; not a border-land in the sense of anything that intervenes between the two, but a region which is in a very real sense common to both; a region in which the higher matter of the astral plane and the lower matter of the mental plane work together in a peculiar and co-ordinated fashion, so that you cannot entirely separate them in their working, so that characteristics of both planes are there found to be united. And the product of activity, when the two kinds of matter from the higher astral and the lower mental are brought together and meet to work together, the product of that coalition has partly the intellectual stamp, partly the stamp which belongs to it as coming to it from the astral plane—the stamp of *kāma*; so that we get a form of consciousness which we are obliged to distinguish by the term drawn from both, *kāma-mānasic*. And some of you, I dare say, in your studies, especially in reading the writings of

H. P. Blavatsky, have sometimes been a little confused by this division which is brought in by her. So much does she bring it in, in fact, that she even occasionally speaks of the kāmamānasic plane as a region where both kāma and manas are working together, where one cannot speak of it as wholly kāmīc or as wholly mānasic, where the two so interpenetrate each other that they may be separated from the pure workings of manas on the one hand and of kāma on the other, but where we get the characteristics of both. This region is therefore conveniently called by the names of both, kāmamānasic. The recognition of that will help us considerably in clearing up some of the difficulties that are left by the ordinary western division, between emotions, taken as divided into sensations and feelings, and the differences that arise between the different classes of feelings, which you will find in a moment that I shall prefer to separate off definitely as emotional.

One other point has to be considered before I take up these things separately, and it is this: that consciousness is one, and that however different the manifestations may be, the life within them is the same. There is but one life working in us, the life of ātmā. It is that which, pouring forth from the nirvāṇic plane, presents itself as buddhi on the buddhic plane,

as manas on the mānasic plane, as kāma on the astral, as prāṇa, through the etheric and the dense body, on the physical. There is but one life, no matter how different may be its manifestations; it is the essential consciousness, and that unit is the root of our being. Everything that is in us comes forth from that; and we should think of it as a great stream of outpouring energy, which changes its appearance and its colour as it clothes itself in the matter of one plane after another, the colour being lent it by the plane—the colouring matter, we might almost call it. While the essential life remains the same, remember always that that essential life draws into itself the colouring characteristic of any plane; so that when the evolution through all the planes is completed, the āt̥mā has taken up the colouring of every plane, and is therefore very different at the conclusion of the human evolution from the āt̥mā at the beginning of that evolution—a point which we are very often apt to lose sight of, and so to get a sort of despairing idea and to say of the whole evolution: “If it be āt̥mā at the beginning and āt̥mā at the ending, what has been done through all this pilgrimage?” While āt̥mā may shake off all the matter of the planes, the colouring obtained through that matter is not lost.

Realising this one outpouring energy, let us remember that in the course of evolution we have the mounting upwards, as the Monad climbs from the mineral to the vegetable, from the vegetable to the animal, from the animal to the animal-man; that we have the downpouring stream, ātmā-buddhi-manas, working downwards towards the mānasic plane, while ātmā-buddhi from below, as the Monad, is working upwards towards the mānasic plane. Hence that same central plane is the meeting-place of the two streams—another thing that shows us its enormous importance and the central position which I gave to it in the five as a whole. It is the meeting-ground of the two great waves of evolution, the one going upwards, from the second Logos, the other coming downwards from the first: they meet on the mental plane and there carry on what we may call the joint evolution.

Let us see, then, how emotion is to be distinguished, how it arises and how it manifests itself. We may here utilise quite rightly and quite fully the western psychology in the analysis that it gives of sensations and feelings. They belong to that upward-climbing Monad that we know as the wave from the second Logos, having the organising characteristic of ātmā-buddhi climbing upwards in evolution. That climbing of the mineral to the vegetable begins, as we

know, by the vivifying of astral matter, the Monad drawing it round itself for the purpose of expressing the capacity of what we call sensation. As it passes onwards from the vegetable to the animal, this astral matter is drawn very much more under the control of the Monad and is roughly shaped round it in the astral body of the animal, at which stage the characteristic of sensation becomes very marked.

Now what is sensation? It is the power to respond to a stimulus from without, the response of the organism to something that touches it, the answer which it sends out to that touch, the sensibility to contact. We have learnt that this power of response resides in the astral matter, not in the physical, that the power of sensation is not a power which is located in the physical body, but that all that the physical body does is to provide certain organs whereby stimuli may be sent in from the physical world and conducted to the true centres of sensation in the astral body. If anything interfere with the link between the astral and the physical, sensation stops; dislocate the astral from the physical, and there is no sensation in the physical. As we know in the use of various drugs, when that dislocation is brought about we lose all power of sensation, of response to any stimulus that may touch us from without.

The power of sensation is in the astral matter, and as that is aggregated together into a primitive kind of astral body centres of sensation are gradually built up, and the animal feels, responds to stimuli, and has what we call primary sensations. As this astral body becomes better organised, these simple sensations aggregate themselves together into feelings, very much after the fashion that western psychology describes, and we have then more complicated movements in the astral body made up of a number of primary sensations, the astral body adding to the mere response to the external stimulus its own power which has been evolved by way of those repeated responses. So that it gradually acquires, as it were, a kind of ready-made apparatus; an apparatus composed of a number of vibrations which are always ready to come into action as a group, and these aggregated vibrations we may at this stage call "feelings". They belong to the astral body, and they come as a great gush in answer to a stimulus, the impulse being in its nature the kind of sensation which gave rise within the astral body—by many repetitions and many workings of the astral body upon the sensation—to this feeling, which is then established as what we may call a group of vibrations; not the simple vibration of the answer that we call

sensation, but the grouped, co-ordinated and modified vibrations which work together as a feeling.

Then comes the still further change which occurs when, from the mental plane, action takes place on the part of the awakened manas after the third life-wave has come down, and manas is brought into activity; that is, mānasic matter is being brought together by that downward wave and the inchoate mental body is formed. We then find that this mental matter begins to vibrate when the astral matter is set vibrating very vehemently, and that when these complicated groups of vibrations are active in the astral body, an answering vibration is set up in the growing mental body. That vibration lends to the feeling something of the mental character. Then memory comes in, and a little inclination to reason and to judgment, and so on; a certain intellectual quality is thus imparted to the feeling, which enriches and deepens it and tends to make it more permanent, giving it a more defined character of its own. This separates it off still more distinctly from other groups of feelings, or vibrations that are called feelings, in their turn; and this mental quality, which is due to the mental region inter-working with the astral, gives us what I will define as emotion. So that we have now three classes instead of

the two of western psychology which takes emotion as the whole. I am taking sensation, feeling and emotion as a triad, as three classes which can be distinguished the one from the other; the first two, the sensations and the feelings, being really kāmīc or astral, the third, emotion, being kāma-mānasic—the manas and the kāma both entering into it and producing this kāma-mānasic vibration. This, in order to use an ordinary English word, we will speak of as “emotion,” remembering that its distinguishing mark is this mental, this intellectual touch added to that of kāma.

It will probably make these theoretical distinctions, as we may perhaps call them, a little clearer if I take two illustrations. One, which you would generally characterise—(when you bring morality into the question)—as good, and the other which you would characterise—(regarded from the moral standpoint)—as bad. Certain sensations in primitive man, as in the animal, are pleasurable, others painful. Take the group of pleasurable sensations which arise either in the animal or in the animal-man in contact with another animal or animal-man of the opposite sex—I am using the word man, of course, in the double sense. Where there is sex difference, the coming into touch with each other gives rise, at the earliest possible stage, to

certain feeling of mutual attraction, a feeling which will be called pleasurable in its nature and which attracts the two together. It is nothing more than a response of the nature of sensation on the part of each to the stimulus afforded by the other; but the two opposites which find one of their expressions in sex—(those two opposites that run all through the universe and that express themselves as sex on the physical plane)—when they come towards each other embodied in two forms separated for the time, attract each other. Each acts as a stimulus to the other and there is the stimulus giving rise to a sensation; but it is a complete inter-action, each acting as a stimulus to the opposite, each feeling the sensation in reply to that stimulus. There is there nothing but the simple sensation in the most primitive form. After a time, however, the activity of the astral body, the grouping together of many such sensations and the placing them, as it were, in connection with beings that have the characteristics of the opposite sex, give rise to a feeling which we may then characterise as something more than a mere sexual sensation. We might call it passion still animal whether in the brute or in the animal-man, but distinguishable from mere sensation, less primitive in its character, with a great deal more astral force and life coming

into it. So that the consciousness—(which, remember, is a unit)—responding by this far more highly organised astral grouping, will have far more complicated vibrations; and these we may speak of as sexual passion. Then comes the time when the intelligence begins to work in connection with this passion, when the intelligence begins to bring in its finer and keener vibrations and we have the emotion of love, *kāma-mānasic* in its character. Later there will be a recognition of many other elements that should enter into that passion to purify and to refine it, and all sorts of other ideas will come into connection with it—the ideas of sacrifice and self-surrender and helpfulness and desire to make happy—and then the whole feeling is enriched and purified and elevated by this influx of the intelligence working in the mental body. In this survey we get the three stages: The sensation, which is the mere response to the stimulus from the opposite sex; the passion, which is the more complicated feeling and into which very many more vibrations in the astral bodies enter; and the emotion, love, of a far higher character and containing far loftier possibilities. These, speaking generally, would be on the side that we should call good.

Then, if we study the question on the side that we regard as evil, we may take a similar

set of three stages in connection with pain. Pain is caused by two antagonists meeting each other, when their meeting gives rise, say by a blow inflicted by one on the other, to a sensation of pain—a response from the astral body, unpleasant, inharmonious, troublesome in its character. That, as a simple sensation, would be nothing more than pain. But gradually that passes, being connected with the one who inflicted the pain, into what we may call the passion of resentment, and the astral body feels an impulse to return the pain it has received; and this passion of resentment, looked at from the standpoint merely of the pairs of opposites, is the corresponding correlative of the passion of attraction on the other side. Then, passing on to the time when the intelligence begins to touch this feeling, or passion, of resentment, we have hatred evolved, just the opposite of love, the repulsion as against attraction, that also belonging to the *kāma-mānasic* region. Hatred is an emotion, not simply a feeling, having this intellectual quality which has deepened and enriched it and made it keener and more subtle in its nature, capable of giving rise to other vibrations exceedingly destructive in their character, just as those given rise to by the vibrations of the emotion of love are constructive in their character. For here we have indeed one of

those great pairs of opposites which are working throughout the whole of the universe.

These two illustrations will probably enable you to bear in mind, in a somewhat concrete fashion, what I mean (whether I am defining them rightly is a matter for debate) by these three classes of sensations, passions and emotions, or sensations, feelings—if you like to use that word instead of passions—and emotions. Now coming from that to an analysis of the action of consciousness on the intellectual, the mental plane, we shall find that its working takes on an entirely different character, that there are certain broad lines of division which separate off its experiences as *mānasic* from its experiences as *kāmic*.

First of all, if you look at the *kāmic* experiences broadly, you will find that they are all of the nature of rushing outwards, that they all are pouring themselves out to seek, that they are never satisfied by an expression which is contained within the consciousness—which is a feeling—but that the consciousness is always trying to reach outwards to something which it looks at as external to itself. That is a broad characteristic of the whole of those—whether you take sensation, or passion, or emotion, it does not matter—they are all marked by this common peculiarity, that they are all part of

the outward-rushing energy of ātmā ; they rush outwards to seek expression and satisfaction in the phenomenal world, they cannot be satisfied alone. In fact, if we think for a moment, we cannot imagine any of these things as existing alone ; if we could think of a person as perfectly isolated in the universe, this outward-rushing energy would be stopped ; it could not express itself except in connection with another. That is the great mark of action on the kāmīc plane, and it is a mark of enormous importance if you want to understand some of the problems I alluded to at the beginning.

But now, when we come to deal with the mental plane, we are at once struck with this immense difference—that it is self-contained. When the consciousness begins to work in its intellectual aspect, and to work with pure mānasic matter undisturbed by these astral vibrations—leaving out the kāma-mānasic entirely—it draws itself in, it concentrates itself, it endeavours to shut out the external world, and looks on everything that comes from outside as a disturbing influence which prevents it from concentrating itself and from exercising its faculties in the natural way. So that the very first thing that the consciousness will do when it begins to work on the mental plane will be to draw itself inwards, carrying with it that with which it has come into

contact on the astral plane. It cannot get ideas until it draws in from the astral body a large number of those emotions, which grow out of the feelings and sensations on the astral plane, and which have been worked up in the astral body and have been handed on by it, for the next activity, to the mental plane. All the great ideas with which that consciousness is going to work will be drawn from the sensations which have been obtained by the astral body coming into contact with the outer universe. There, again, western psychology is right; it is continually right in its earlier analysis, while it breaks down when it comes to deal with the deeper phases of consciousness. It is quite true that when dealing with the awakening mentality in man everything is found to depend upon what is supplied to it from outside: it cannot start itself, it must answer; and the earlier vibrations of the mānasic consciousness can only be awakened by receiving vibrations from outside which shall stir it into activity. It will then send out a little answer, and as it sends it out it will draw back again, drawing with it the experiences it has obtained; but it cannot make any use of those experiences outside its own limits, it can do nothing with them as mental food, until it draws them within the circle of the mind and begins then to work upon them in its own sphere.

And in order to do that successfully, having drawn itself in, it must shut out the external world and must not permit all these surging vibrations to come in and confuse its attention, for its attention has to be directed to that which it has drawn into itself, if it is to make any use of those experiences and so develop germinal intellectual faculties. Bear in mind, then, that fundamental difference of intellectual working. True, it must gather from outside, the astral body must hand on; but the condition of success for the intellectual working is that it shall concentrate itself on that which is obtained from the lower vehicle. Drawing in these results, these threads, it sets to work upon them, and all its characteristic workings are these internal vibrations which deal with the fruits of the experience gathered from outside. It puts side by side a number of these things which we call at this stage "perceptions," and these perceptions or percepts are ranged side by side, and the mind contemplates them and begins to develop what we call the power of comparison. Looking at them all, it sees their likenesses and their differences and compares one with another. Having thus considered and compared them, it begins to draw out their likenesses and puts those likenesses together, and out of them forms an idea of a rather more elaborate character: it

then takes all the differences and makes those into dividing marks. We find now an immense amount of what we call analysis—that is, the breaking up of these things by the comparison which recognises identities and differences; and by fixing the attention on differences the process of analysis goes on.

Thus the mind, in its lower stages, by taking all these concrete ideas which it evolves from all that it has obtained from the outer world, by putting them together and classifying them, by building up more complicated ideas out of them, develops, by means of this concrete activity, all the powers that we recognise as the intellectual powers—judgment, reasoning, comparison, memory, then the drawing of conclusions, the deductive and inductive faculties, the logical faculties—all these things are gradually evolved. But if we consider them, we shall see that their evolution must depend on the power of the mind to isolate itself, so that it shall not be confused by inrushes from the outer world. It wants to be alone, it wants to be quiet, it wants to shut the doors of the senses, and within its own self-contained realm to apply itself to those results which it has obtained from the lower vehicles in which the consciousness has been functioning. It is only as this has gone on to a very great extent, as the phenomenal world has been used

for the shaping of all these concrete ideas and the working upon them and the reasoning upon them, it is only then that the higher faculties of the intelligence will begin to evolve on the formless plane, and abstract thought—the drawing out of the common element in these various separated concrete ideas—will begin. Slowly and gradually that lower activity will make active the higher manas; on its own plane it will enter on its own especial work of abstract thinking, and the highest intellectual faculties will then be gradually developed. These higher faculties are classified as synthetical rather than as analytical: they are no longer engaged in breaking up into their component parts the ideas on which the mental activity has been working, but are re-combining them and by synthesis are creating new ideas—ideas which are the images of realities in the Universal Mind. This is the quality in man which makes it possible that he in turn shall become universal, which evolves within the limits of the causal body that third aspect of the life of the first Logos, that quality of the Universal Mind which is to be the essence of individuality when the limits of the individual have fallen away.

Looking at that, then, as a rough definition of mental working, we come back again to the idea which is so important for our understanding

of its place in evolution, that the mind is the self-contained part of the consciousness, and that the self-containing is necessary for its perfect evolution. The mental plane is, as we have seen, the balance, the centre of the whole evolution. The plane above and the plane below have a certain definite relation the one to the other, and this relation lies in the common characteristic that in both of them is the consciousness pouring itself out. On the buddhic plane the consciousness is pouring itself outwards; on the kāmīc plane the consciousness is pouring itself out. In both cases it is seeking expression by unifying. On the kāmīc plane it does this on a very much lower level by gaining possession of an object and bringing it into itself, by taking possession of it as "mine," by holding it and assimilating it; whereas on the higher plane, the buddhic, it pours itself forth to include, and not feeling the sense of difference of the "I" and of the "mine," it is conscious of a unity which sees all that it touches as part of itself and includes all within itself. Thus the outpouring differs in this subtle way from the outpouring on the kāmīc plane, that the one is pouring out to the external, while the other, if I may use the phrase, is pouring internally. The consciousness on the higher plane recognises everything as part of its own life and its own

nature ; it does not need to go forth in order to find, finding all as within itself, yet still having that expansive character which is continually including, never excluding, which does not know limitations, which does not recognise boundaries. Hence it has sometimes been said that the kāmīc plane is the reflection of the buḍḍhic on a lower level ; it shows, as it were, in an image down below a kind of reflection of the qualities which are found above. Just as may be seen in the water the reflection of a mountain which is by the side of a lake, so in kāma there is a kind of reflection of certain buḍḍhic qualities. And thinking, as we are taught to think, of the whole of these creative activities as pairs continually reflected, we find these pairs existing on the nirvāṇic and the physical planes, on the buḍḍhic and the kāmīc, and once more the intellectual region as the point of balance for the whole.

Now this, if carefully worked out in our thought, will throw considerable light upon those curious problems that I spoke of with regard to the wonderful and unexpected change that sometimes takes place in the life of an individual, with regard also to that problem as to why we find a touch of deeper insight in some who—especially in old age after a life of unselfishness and of compassion—are able to give us counsel

and advice marked by that deeper insight which we are accustomed to connect with the idea of spiritual activity. Let us think of the change itself. We find, perhaps, a person in whom the rush of the emotional nature is tremendously strong; he is marked by great enthusiasm, by a headlong quality, by lack of balance, by lack of consideration, by a tendency to rush with enormous energy into some undertaking which attracts the feelings and the emotions. Perhaps it is some scheme of benevolence which may be exceedingly ill-considered, which may have in it innumerable flaws and blunders, all of which will work mischief as that scheme of benevolence is put into activity. But the strong emotional nature has no time to think of that; the tremendous surge of emotion carries it right away and it only sees that the scheme promises to do good, promises to end misery, to sweep away poverty, to change the face of the world. It cannot stop for all the cold consideration as to whether means are adapted to ends, and all the rest; it must go out in a tremendous rush, and out it goes. It does a considerable amount of good, and also a very large amount of evil; it breaks down a great many things that might have helped, it gives life to a great many things that are bitter exceedingly; and the whole thing is a great wave—with all the force of a wave

certainly—but also with destructive power which ill-regulated force must always present. It destroys, truly, but yet has within it that great constructive force of the universe, the emotion of love, the desire to help. In that outrush, therefore, it is also constructing, and having in it that quality of love, it brings about a certain answering vibration on the buddhic plane. By the self-surrender that will continually go with that great outrush of emotion and enthusiasm, by the willingness of the person who feels it to throw his own life away if only he may serve the larger life that he sees suffering around him, by the great impulse of self-sacrifice that does not count the cost but is willing to give itself completely—health and life and everything else—if only the suffering may be relieved, is added to the kāmīc passion and emotion a touch from the buddhic plane, some recognition of the unity which makes it seem well that the separated life should give itself for the life of the whole. Thus is set stirring within the evolving life, the evolving Self, a little vibration on the buddhic plane which will throw down on to the kāmīc a slight ray of light, giving to it its own beauty and attractive power and working, in him who feels it, however ill-considered his action, however foolish that which he does, for the evolution of the

spiritual nature and thus enabling a step forward to be made in that incarnation. The light from the buddhic plane, thrown upon the intelligence, brings it also into greater activity, enables it to see an idea of which, intellectually recognised, the intellect takes hold. The intellect seizes this great force which was started in the kāmīc nature, changes its direction, while leaving it as a force, and utilises that tremendous energy, directing it to a wiser end, and by a wiser method, so that the whole nature evolves forwards and upwards and a great change is seen even within the limits of one life.

For it must be remembered that for progress force is absolutely necessary and that force is continually being evolved by way of the emotions. Granted that in the earlier stages of that emotional rush it may be a force which is working very foolishly, none the less is it a force; whereas if there is no force there is not the motive-power which will get the creature on. He lacks the steam, and however perfect the machine, it will not go if there is no steam in it. We may have a piece of magnificent machinery which, if we could set it going, might do wonders; but if we cannot get any steam into the boiler, or if the boiler is too small to give sufficient energy for the moving of the machine, it will remain there without motion for want of that very energy

that should come from its boiler. Now the kāmīc nature is the boiler of the evolving Self, and no machinery that it can make anywhere, however admirable it may be and whatever its possibilities in the future, can work in any given incarnation if that force is lacking which will move it. But given the force, we can turn it to any end that is recognised as good; and when the gleam of buddhic light flows down upon the intelligence, that illuminated intelligence will recognise a great ideal and will begin to utilise the force and turn it in a better direction. A change in the object is all that is needed in these cases. Turn the same force towards a higher object and the aim will be achieved. The great force in the kāmīc nature that was being used for the sake of the personal self, when turned to the service of the common Self of man will make the hero, the pioneer and the saint. It is a change in the direction of the force caused by the change of the object which is recognised as desirable: make that change—and it is sometimes done by a flash of illumination—and then the whole of that energy will be turned towards the achieving of the higher end.

Suppose, however, that there is a great development of the pure intellect only, while this emotional side of the nature has been dwarfed

and stunted in any given incarnation; or suppose that in the course of evolution the tendency has been especially towards the intellectual, while the emotional nature life after life has been little developed—which is quite possible, because our development is often exceedingly lop-sided—there will then be building on the mental plane a piece of magnificent machinery that in a future incarnation will be of priceless value. Do not imagine for one moment that its building is to be deprecated; do not imagine that it is to be considered undesirable; it is necessary for the full and perfect evolution, it has to be made at some time or another, it has gradually to be achieved in one incarnation or another, but I am simply considering one incarnation for the sake of clearing the mind. Imagine, then, that the whole of it has been devoted to the intellectual building—towards analysis, towards synthesis, towards working out ideas on the mental plane—what is the end of that working? Isolation. We build round us a wall to keep the outer impacts away, trying to be calm and still and untouched by anything from outside, in order that the mental energy, balanced naturally, may do its work. There we have the building up of the great mānasic possibilities; but such a nature may find in any one incarnation insuperable difficulties in the way of achieving the spiritual

life. The isolation is that which makes the very expansion which is a necessity of the spiritual life impossible for the time and the whole conditions of the working are those which are least favourable to the expansive and inclusive qualities. And although such a life would have a most useful and necessary place in the total evolution—as bringing the intellect into magnificent working order and ensuring a splendid and rapid evolution in a future birth, yet, for the time being, spiritual aid would be practically thrown away upon it, because the whole force of the evolution would be turned towards the concentrated, isolated growth, and not towards the pouring forth of life.

Now in looking at the whole of our nature in this way, we shall see how necessary the evolution of each of the planes is for the perfect growth, the perfect expression of the Self. We shall see how, instead of putting the one against the other—the intellectual man decrying the emotional, and the emotional man saying hard things about the intellectual, the one scornfully saying that it is only cold intellect, and the other saying, with equal scorn, that it is only ill-regulated emotion—the balanced and thoughtful person would see in each a necessary stage of evolution and, if he had reached the point where able to give help to each,

would consider only the nature of the aid that he should give, in order to help forward a man to the best possible advantage in the activities to which the Self in him was chiefly turning its attention. For we continually fail to recognise that it is the Self in each of us that should be the guiding force in our evolution; that it is not for one to say how the Self in another shall evolve, what activities he shall develop in one incarnation, what line he shall follow in any particular birth. The Self itself chooses the pathway along which it will go, and it is for that inner Self to decide for its vehicles which of them it will develop, along which path lies for it the line of least resistance in any given birth. And anyone who, having evolved to a higher life is able to help those who have not reached so far, will not consider which qualities to him may be most attractive, which path to him may seem most intrinsically desirable; he will rather consider what the Self is working out in that individual and how he can bring energy to bear to assist the Self in its work in that incarnation which it has in hand. So that in all the dealings of the great Masters with evolving humanity, this question of means and methods, of times and seasons, exercises determining force on the nature of the help. They give; and many people would sometimes

feel less discouraged, would, in their judgment of the great work which goes on around them, be better balanced and would be seeing things more clearly, if they recognised that the Master gives help in the way that it is most needed by the individual, and does not think for one moment whether in giving that help its nature may be misconstrued, or whether He may be thought to be more or less generous in His contact with any particular soul. He gives what he knows to be the best; He does not give what might bring Him the greatest outrush of gratitude from the limited consciousness with which He is dealing. It often happens, therefore, that in dealing with a man of keen intellect, of great mental power, the Master gives help which is never appreciated by that man during the whole of his incarnation. He helps him onwards in his intellectual growth, helps him to strengthen and to build more perfectly his intellectual apparatus, not minding at all, in His perfect selflessness, in His perfect compassion, whether that man, if he knows of the Master's existence, may think himself neglected, unhelped, or left on one side; but giving, as all Those do give Who stand on those heights of selflessness, the exact aid which is wanted by the evolving Self to quicken its evolution, the exact kind of succour which makes the

final achievement easier than it would otherwise be.

I cannot but think that if, as students, we were sometimes to look at the matter in this broader way, dealing with it in the light of Theosophical knowledge, we should become more compassionate, more tolerant, more charitable to the infinite diversity of evolution that we see around us on every side; more able to help our brothers, more grateful for the help that we ourselves receive.

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# ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 2

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## THE ATTITUDE OF THE ENQUIRER

BY

C. W. LEADBETTER

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THE THEOSOPHIST OFFICE

ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA

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1912



## The Attitude of the Enquirer

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I HAVE received many letters from those who are put in the position of lecturers and teachers of Theosophy, asking how best to meet the constant demands of enquirers for proof of the accuracy of the Theosophical teaching. Another common remark of the enquirer is: "You have a large literature; I am a busy man. Where am I to begin in all this? Give me the most important part first."

Instead of writing a number of private letters, I have thought it best to put an answer, once for all, in the pages of *The Adyar Bulletin*, to which later enquirers can be referred.

What should be the attitude of the enquirer towards the wonderful mass of new truth which is put before him in Theosophical teaching? It should be an intelligently receptive attitude—not one of carping criticism on the one hand, nor of blind belief on the other, but of endeavour to understand the different facts as they are

presented to him, and to make them his own. In Theosophy we strongly deprecate the attitude of blind belief, for we say that it has been the cause of a vast amount of the evil of the world. On this point the teaching of the Eastern Masters is emphatic, for they regard superstition as one of the fetters which it is absolutely necessary that a man should cast off before he can hope to make any progress on the occult Path. They also regard doubt as a fetter, but they say that the only way to get rid of doubt is not by blind faith, but by the acquisition of knowledge. It would be quite useless for a man to exchange blind faith in orthodox Christianity for a similar blind faith in those who happened to be writing or speaking on Theosophy. To say: "Thus saith Madame Blavatsky or Mrs. Besant," is after all only a small advance on saying: "Thus saith S. Paul or S. John."

We who live in western countries have a bad heredity behind us in these matters, for the point of view of our forefathers has usually been either the blind faith of the unintelligent and biassed person, or the blank and rather militant incredulity of the materialist. We have been too much in the habit of thinking that what does not happen in Europe or America is not worth taking account of, and that nobody outside of

ourselves knows anything at all. Many of us have grown up in the midst of the ridiculous theory that there was only one religion in the world, and that the vast majority of its inhabitants were 'heathens,' whom we had to 'save,' and that if we could not do that, they must be left to 'the uncovenanted mercies of God'. It seems incredible that civilised people could ever believe anything so silly, but what I state is actually the fact. When we think that we may have had among our recent ancestors people who were capable of *that*, we see at once that we are but ill-prepared for the reception of a rational creed.

Again, we have been unfortunate in that we had not even the whole of Christianity, for history shows us that what has been taught to us is only a dismembered fragment of the original form of that religion. Before the Gnostic doctors were cast out, Christianity had a system of philosophy fully equal to that of the other religions, but after their departure it was but a truncated faith. Still its ethics remained to it, and they will be found to be exactly the same as those of the other great world-faiths. In Theosophy we hold that it matters little what a man believes, but much what he does; whether he is kind and noble, just and gentle, pure and true.

It may be of interest to western readers to remember that on this subject the teaching of the Christian scripture is exactly the same as that of Theosophy. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew will be found a striking account, said to have been given by the Christ Himself, of what is commonly called the day of judgment, when all men are to be brought before Him and their final destiny is to be decided according to the answer which they are able to give to His questions. Remember that, according to the theory, the Christ Himself is to be the judge on that occasion, and therefore He can make no mistake as to the procedure. What then are the questions upon the answers to which the future of these men is to depend? From what one hears of modern Christianity one would expect that the first question would be: "Do you believe in Me?" and the second one: "Do you attend Church regularly?" The Christ, however, unaccountably forgets to ask either of these questions. He asks: "Did you feed the hungry, did you give drink to the thirsty, did you clothe the naked, did you visit those who were sick and in prison?" That is to say, were you ordinarily kind and charitable in your relations to your fellow-men?"

And it is according to the answers to *those* questions that the destiny of the man is

decided. So far as He, the Judge, has explained Himself, any heathen who had done these things would at once pass into eternal felicity, for He says no single word about belie at all. As regards all these virtues the teachings of all the religions are identical. The daily life of a really good Christian will be found to be identical with that of a really good Buddhist or a really good Hindū. One will call his religious exercises by the name of prayer, while the others call them meditation, but in the nature of them there is little difference. Each enjoins the practice of the same virtues; each reprobates the same vices.

We must clear our minds utterly of the extraordinary theory that a man's religion is a question of importance. It depends entirely upon where the man happens to be born. You are, let us say, a Christian, and you cannot conceive it as possible that you could have been anything else; yet if you had been born in an Indian family, you would have belonged just as unquestioningly to the Hindū religion, or to the Buddhist if you had been born in Ceylon or Siam. Therefore we must entirely cast aside the curious prejudice that it is necessary for a man to hold some particular form of religion if he is to obtain final perfection.

On taking up the study of Theosophy it is necessary that we should adopt an entirely new attitude—that we should open the doors of the mind, and learn to treat religion as a matter of common-sense, exactly as we do science. On the one hand we must accept nothing which does not commend itself to us as reasonable, and on the other hand we must not expect proofs of a nature incongruous with the fact which we are considering. It is often impossible to give for psychological problems and theories a demonstration along mathematical lines, or a proof on the physical plane which a man can hold in his hand. The proof of any proposition must be congruous with the nature of the proposition, and consequently the final proof of some of the deepest Theosophical doctrines must lie in the experience of the evolved soul.

A common-sense attitude will enable us to determine whether we can know a certain thing positively, or whether it is necessary to take first what seems to be a reasonable working hypothesis, and then see how far future experience supports or weakens it. Much of the Theosophical teaching must remain as a hypothesis for each man until he is able to develop powers by which he can see for himself; but in the meantime he may easily acquire *practical* certainty with regard to it, by weighing it against all other hypotheses

and seeing how perfectly it, and it alone, accounts for the observed phenomena of life. This is exactly the ground on which are held a large number of what are commonly called scientific facts.

It is a valuable exercise for the student to think carefully which of his beliefs in ordinary life are really founded upon direct personal knowledge. He believes, for example, that the earth rotates upon its axis; yet all the evidence of his daily life goes to prove exactly the contrary. The ground is stable beneath his feet, and he cannot in any way prove to himself that the sun, moon and stars do not really move above him, exactly as they appear to do. There is proof available of the rotation of the earth. There is the Foucault pendulum experiment and the experiment with the gyroscope. If a man has seen those experiments tried, he *knows* that the earth rotates; if he has not, he does not know it, but only believes it. He believes it on good evidence, but it is not the evidence of his senses. A reasonable hypothesis is necessary in order to induce a man to work, and here his imagination comes into play. He must be evolved enough to imagine a thing as possible, or he must be able to abstract his ideas and deduce from them a working principle, before he can be induced to make an effort towards proving a fact as true.

Theosophy presents to the student several working hypotheses which appeal to his reason, and at the same time it promises him success in demonstrating them to be true, if he will do certain things. It tells him that some men have already had success in this demonstration, that they have been able to develop in themselves certain powers which enable them to know that these things are true, and that therefore it is possible for him also to do this, though it does not conceal from him the difficulty of the undertaking.

Theosophy has a considerable literature, but it has no inspired Scriptures. We who write books on the various branches of the subject, put before our friends the results of our investigations, and we take every care that what we state shall be scrupulously accurate as far as our knowledge goes; but the model which we set before us when we write is not the sacred Scripture but the scientific manual. So far as the western world is concerned, the study of Theosophical subjects is comparatively a new one, although in the East many books have been written in which these matters are expounded; but these oriental books naturally do not approach them from the modern scientific point of view. Our plan in verifying the information originally given to us has been just what was adopted in the beginning of the sciences of chemistry or astronomy—

a careful observation of all the phenomena within reach; their tabulation, and the endeavour to deduce from them the general laws which govern them.

We are then in the position of the early students of a new science, and although, thanks to the information we have received from eastern Teachers, we have already grasped the main outline of our science, our own investigations are constantly adding to our knowledge of its detail, and this fact often makes it necessary for us to modify statements made in the earlier days of the movement, and to amend imperfect or premature generalisations. The details will increase in number and accuracy as the number of those who can make the investigations increases, but the broad outlines of principles which have been given to us will always remain the same.

Our attitude to Theosophy should, I think, be thus characterised.

(1) We must not exchange the blind belief in the authority of the Church for an equally blind faith in personal Theosophical teachers.

(2) We must preserve an open mind and an intelligently receptive attitude.

(3) We should accept as working hypotheses the truths which are given to us, and should set to work to prove them for ourselves.

(4) We should realise that this teaching sets before us the scheme of the Logos for

His universe, and that the condition of making progress in that universe is to learn the rules of that scheme, and set ourselves to work with them and not against them.

(5) We should seek development or progress not for the sake of ourselves, but in order that the knowledge we may acquire may be used for the benefit of humanity, and that we may fit ourselves to be the servants of that humanity.

(6) We must change absolutely our point of view towards life. When regarding the sorrow and suffering of the world, we must put aside the despairing attitude of the theologian for one of hopefulness, because the teaching fills us with the calm certainty that everything will at last be well.

#### THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRUTHS

Again, Theosophy lays before us a vast mass of new truths with regard to the constitution both of man and of the universe, and also with regard to their past and future. Though the outline is simple the detail is considerable. We have therefore to think in what order we shall consider these truths; what is their relative importance. It seems to me that they group themselves naturally into three great classes: first, the ethical teachings, and the reason for them; second, the explanation of the constitution

of man and the planes on which he lives; third; the remainder of the teaching, the great mass of information about planetary chains and earlier races of mankind.

They come thus in order of importance, because the knowledge of the ethical teaching and the reason for it is necessary for the daily life of man, because as he learns even a little of it he can instantly proceed to put it into practice. If, having learnt so much, something should occur to prevent him from learning more, he will still have gained a priceless possession—one which will affect the whole of his future life, not in this world only but in others also.

The second block of information, with regard to the constitution of man and the world in which he lives, is also of great importance to him, as showing him how to do many of the things which the first division of the teaching has commended to him, as showing him also how to be much more useful to his fellow-men than he could be without this knowledge.

The third block of teaching, though keenly interesting, is less directly practical. It has its value; it has a great value; for from the past we may in many cases predict the future, and from it we may learn many a lesson which will be of help to us in that future. At the same time one must admit that a man might

be just as loyal a subject, just as good a citizen, and just as useful to his fellow-men if he had never heard about the planetary chains; whereas it is not true that he would be just as good in any of those capacities if he remained ignorant of the first and second of our great classes of truths.

First, the ethics and the reason for them. The ethical teaching of Theosophy is precisely the same as that of any and all of the great religions. There is therefore nothing new for us to learn here; the only difference is that Theosophy gives us a scientific reason for our ethics, which most religions do not. This consideration of the reason for ethical teaching involves a very large block of the Theosophical teaching, for the ultimate reason for all good action is that it may be in harmony with the divine plan, the will of the Logos. That we may understand what will be in harmony with it, we must first try to grasp as much as is possible for us of that divine plan itself. This involves the consideration of the nature of God and the method of His working, and also His relation to man. Under this head we must speak of the Logos of our solar system, and the beginnings of that system, of the atom and planes, of the nature, of the formation, constitution and development of man, and of

the methods appointed for that development, and the way in which he can hasten it, and of the obstacles which he will find in his way.

Under the second heading we must take up in greater detail the various vehicles of man and their relation to the different planes of nature. We must learn to understand ourselves, in order that we may direct intelligently the complicated machinery of the vehicles. This is an intensely practical consideration for us; we are living upon all these planes now, though most of us do not know it; we are using our mental and astral bodies as bridges to carry to the physical brain the messages from the ego, and to carry back to him in return the information which they obtain from external impacts of all sorts. Unless we understand these bodies we cannot use them to the best advantage, we cannot get out of them all that we might. Apart from the fact of that constant use of the vehicles, we all spend about a third of our lives in the astral body—in a state which we commonly call sleep. After physical death we enter upon a long life in these higher vehicles, and it becomes once more obvious that the more we know about them the more efficient and the more comfortable will this life be. These higher bodies have their powers and their capacities as well as the physical body

If we understand them we can utilise all these for our own advancement and for the helping of our fellows, so that their study is eminently practical.

The third division is that which treats of the past evolution of man. It deals with the planetary chain of which our earth is a part, with its relation to other chains in the solar system, and with the successive life-waves which have passed over these chains. It takes up the question of the work of the great Official who superintends the formation of each Root Race and its subdivision into branch races. It explains how men come to be at such different levels in life, and accounts for the formation of classes and castes. Although this appears to be less practical than the other kinds, we shall find not only that it is intensely interesting, but that it has its uses as well. It is a remarkable fact that all religions have made it a special point to teach their followers something of the beginnings of the world and of man. In the Jewish scripture you have the extraordinary story of the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis, which is unfortunately adopted just as it stands by the Christian Church; but each religion has some such story—even those of savage tribes. It is clear therefore that those who found religions must know that this information is of great

importance for man. Madame Blavatsky has followed in the footsteps of her Teachers in that respect, for the whole of her monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, is a sermon upon the text of the Stanzas of Dzyān, which give an account of the origin of man and of our system.

The point of first importance is that we should live the life; the second that we should understand our possibilities; and when we have got so far, we may then take up with advantage the study of past history. In following out thoroughly that first block of teaching, we have arrived at certainty in regard to the rest. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." The best way to prove to oneself the truth of these Theosophical doctrines is to take them for granted and to live as though they were true; then the proof will soon come.



ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 3

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# The Religion of Theosophy

*A paper contributed to the Convention of Religions  
held in Allahabad, India, on the 9th, 10th and  
11th of January, 1911*

BY

BHAGAVAN DAS, M. A.

*May 1911*

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THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

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# The Religion of Theosophy

THE duty assigned to me, in this Convention of Religions, and appropriately at its very end, is to place before you a brief statement of the Religion of Theosophy—which includes and sums up all religions.

We have met together under the ægis of the British Government to-day—representatives of many creeds and races; and our common medium of communication is the English language. This language—the language of a people who, in the modern world, have approached nearest perhaps of all nations, though very far from attaining yet, to that due balancing of the intellectual, the militant and the industrial (or Brāhmaṇa, Kṣhattriya and Vaishya) vocations, types and aspects of individual men as well as collective Society which makes a healthy and happy social organisation—this language is spoken to-day by about 125 millions of human beings, and is understood by probably 25 millions more in all parts of the world, especially amongst the thoughtful and educated of all nations. Hence it is perhaps the best medium for the spreading of ideas over the wide surface of the earth at the present time. Hence, apparently were the epoch-making works of Madame H. P. Blavatsky, herself a Russian by birth, written in the English language. And hence I shall discuss the Religion of Theosophy in the terms of that rich-worded language, which is likely to be true and full

of meaning in the etymologies of all its important words, because developed by the guiding genius and containing within it the spirit of a people who, being the product of the mixings of almost all the subdivisions of the Aryan Race, are perhaps the most many-sided in mind, and who are comparatively well balanced and just and righteous in themselves, on the whole. With the help of that language I shall endeavour to show to you, though all too cursorily, that the Religion of Theosophy is that Universal Religion which runs through all special religions and includes them all, even as the solar energy runs through all the endless forms and marvellous manifestations of heat, light, electricity, magnetism, X-rays, N-rays, etc., on our earth, and includes them all; even as the genus runs through and encloses all individuals; even as humanity is present in and enfolds all human beings, however much any of them may regard themselves as separate and strive to cut themselves off from any others.

The word Religion, by Latin derivation, means something which binds. And Religion is essentially that something which binds together the hearts of all men, without distinction of race, creed, caste, colour, or sex; binds them all to each other with the golden thread of Universal Brotherhood; binds them to the heart of that Universal God who is the very Principle of Life, of Consciousness, of Being, in every thing and all things. It is that which binds the hearts of men to all ideals; which makes them *believe* in the now non-existent future; which compels them to work for the good of distant generations yet unborn, for the helping of the inhabitants of far countries never visited, for the realisation of aims in a far-off age and place not at all visible to the fleshly eye of the present worker. It is that which makes

the unbeliever by profession an unconscious believer by action, despite himself and despite all logic and consistency. All effort, all aspiration, for the distant, the future, the unknown—be the striving political or industrial, social or scientific, artistic or philanthropic, or even personal and selfish—is essentially religious. In all such striving, the element of the hope of success, of the faith in one's possibilities, of the belief in the continuance of the present into the future—be that future an hour distant or a million years—is the element of true Religion. It is the conscious or unconscious recognition of the fact that the spirit of man extends beyond the present moment, extends from the past through the present into the future, and that if it extends even a moment before and a moment after, then and therefore, for the same reason, whatever it be, it necessarily extends immortally throughout the eternity of time and the infinity of space, and embraces all things and beings, however much the bodies of men conflict and perish.

Wherever we have a *common feeling*, wherever we have *esprit de corps* however narrow, there we have the very *spirit* of Religion though restricted, there we have, however limited, the manifestation of the Unity of the Self, the Supreme Spirit, which alone binds together many selves into one, and makes of disjointed parts an organic whole.

The connotation of the Samskr̥t word Dharma is the same :

“That which sustains and upholds all the worlds, that which maintains itself, that which is held close and fast by the wise and the virtuous, that which binds and holds together all the children of the Universal God, that which is the Supreme Spirit Itself—that is Dharma.”

Sympathy, fellow-feeling, love, the sensing of the common Self of all in all—which is the one bond that binds and holds together individuals, families, tribes, nations, races, even as hate is the one sharp-edged instrument that sunders and scatters them apart—this love of all living things is of the very essence of Religion. Such Universal Love is the first and the last manifestation of God, the Universal and Immortal Self. It is this which triumphs eternally over Death and Hate and Evil. All association, all co-operation of any kind, within whatsoever limits, is the product of this Fellow-feeling, this Common-feeling, this One-feeling.

The Hindū seeks to regenerate and aggrandise the Hindū people. The Musalmān labors for the cause of Pan-Islāmism. The Christian strives to maintain undiminished the supremacy of the Christian nations. The member of the Hebrew race thinks only of the children of Israel and longs to restore the departed glories of Zion. The Buddhist, the Jain, the Sikh, the Pārsī, each works for the people who bear the name of his religion. The same is the case with countries and nationalities. The Englishman, the German, the Frenchman, the American, the Russian, the Japanese, each feels surges of pride and satisfaction in thinking of the great deeds recorded in the history of his particular nation, but not so of any other.

Why is this so? Why is it that simply because I am named a Hindū in this present life, another person also bearing the name of Hindū who lives two thousand miles away from me, near Cape Comorin or Peshāwar, and whom I have never seen and never am likely to see, excites my concern in his troubles more readily, more deeply, sincerely, than my brother of Islām or Christianity who is my next-door neighbour,

and with whom I am brought into contact daily in various ways? Why should I take far more trouble to provide for the well-being of my great-great-grandson whom I shall never see, than for the comfort of this my neighbour but belonging to another creed? What solid and substantial reason can be given for such doings? Is it not a mere sentiment, an illusory feeling, an empty name, an airy nothing, a mere imagination and self-imposed hallucination—that my interests are the same as those of these unknown persons? He who runs may read that, in the great conflicts of religions, it is not the physical persons that are inimical primarily. For any one follower of any one religion can become a convert in a moment to any other, practically even if not nominally in one or two cases. It is the “Ideas” and “Ideals” that are in conflict. “*My way of thinking and living* is the best and should be followed by all, and must prevail”—all mere imagination, idea, ideal. And yet these airy nothings, these mere sentiments and imaginations, cause wars and revolutions and overturn existing kingdoms, or discover and conquer new countries and build great civilisations and found new empires; depopulate and spread ruin over flourishing lands, or develop glorious new arts and sciences in them.

Therefore are these sentiments far more necessary to attend to than the so-called substantial things of life, even as the invisible air is more necessary to the living organism than solid food. They reign at the birth of life and at its decay and death also. They all, in their growing gradation of familism, parochialism, tribalism, provincialism, patriotism, nationalism, are but the manifestations of the feeling of the Common Self in larger and larger circles. And they are thus powerful in their operation, *because they are*

all in growing degree, embodiments of the Unity of the Omnipotent Spirit. And in the conflicts of religions, that religion will thrive most which best helps forward inclusiveness, and that religion must decay most which most fosters mutual separation and narrow-minded sectarianism and exclusiveness.

Whatsoever that Self identifies itself with, one interest or a thousand, one body or a thousand, whatsoever it makes "mine" by act of imagination, that becomes near and dear; whatever it dissociates itself from, whatever it regards as other, as foreign, as strange, that becomes distant and disagreeable. Brothers born of the same father and mother will slay each other for a trifle which may happen to come between and separate them. Utter strangers, from the ends of the world, will meet and marry as man and woman and become all in all to each other. Are not both phases the veriest tricks of the imagination, "mine" and "thine," "mine" and "not mine"? Verily, as the Scriptures declare, nothing is dear except for the sake of the Self. And as the circumference of the individual self expands with growth of intellect and imagination, so more and more things and beings are enclosed within it. The man begins with identification of himself with (that is to say, love of) his own body, and goes on step by step to love of family, of townsfolk, of countrymen, of race, of fellow-religionists. Each one of these indicates one step in the growth and evolution of the soul. But the process is far from complete when it has arrived at the stage of patriotism and nationalism, Pan-Hindūism or pan-Islāmism or pan-Christianism, or pan-whites, or pan-yellows, or pan-browns, or pan-blacks, or pan-reds. The synthesis of the Self is not yet perfect. The member of any one race, the follower of any one creed, sees and feels "himself" in

the members of that race only, in the followers of that creed only. But a higher integration of these differentiated units is possible. It is possible to see and feel the Self in all men, whatsoever their creed or colour. And if a common country, a common language, a common script, a common colour of skin, a common idea, make such strong bonds, how much stronger the bond that a Common Self, a Common Life, should make between man and man ! When that is done, when the Universal Spirit of all men is recognised and realised by all men, then shall we have reached the stage of Humanism, the federation of all the nations. Of this stage the glorious Sūfī sang :

Vedas, Avestā, Bible, Al-Qurān,  
 Temple, Pagoda, Church and Kaābā-stone—  
 All these and more my heart can tolerate  
 Since my Religion now is Love alone !

A yet further reach remains—the state in which the soul recognises its identity not only with all human life but with all lives whatever, above as well as below the human stage. Of that state of the soul it has been said that :

Seeking nothing, he gains all ;  
 Foregoing self, the Universe grows “ I ”.

That is the ultimate stage of Religion, the culmination, by upward gradation, of all smaller degrees of fellow-feeling in the Great Feeling of the Common Life and Universal Consciousness in which all worlds and world-inhabitants live and move and have their being, the Great Feeling which different religions, speaking the same thing in different languages, have termed Mokṣha or Nirvāṇa or Beatitude or Salvation or Merāj.

Such is the finality of all Religions. But we, who are met together in this Convention of Religions

to-day are, I take it, striving to induce ourselves and our brothers to step into the penultimate stage, into that Humanism which will enfold within its patriarchal arms all smaller "isms" attached to special creeds, countries and races, and give equal share to each in the good things of life, equal place to each within its world-wide home, equal tolerance, nay, active affection, to each, letting each gain its goal and expand finally into the Ultimate along its own way in the distances of time

Of great, good augury, therefore, I believe, are such Conventions of Religions; the highest syntheses of all the many co-operative activities of the workers of to-day; the most hopeful sprouts of the seed of that all-inclusive Universal Brotherhood which is the very Religion of Theosophy, as embodied in the first and most important of the three Objects of the Theosophical Society, *viz.* To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, caste, colour or sex.

And it needs no proof that this general principle of love and sympathy, of charity and humanity, of universal goodwill and harmlessness, of aspiration and effort for the ever-growing welfare of all, is present in all religions.

But beside this general principle, there are some other features, more detailed aspects of that same principle, which also may be seen to be common to all religions and in which we may discern the real ground-plan of Comparative Religion.

Psychologists are agreed that the individualised consciousness has three aspects. Some call them intellect, feeling and volition. Some prefer the names thought, emotion and conation. Others call them cognition, desire and action. Others, imagination,

will and self-assertion. Others, wisdom, will and activity. Others, wisdom, love and will, reversing the use of the words will and love, but meaning the same facts. Still others use other words. But there is a fairly general agreement as to the essential three facts or aspects involved : named in Samskr̥t jñānam, ichchhā and kriyā, by common consent of all "seers". And as these are the aspects of Consciousness in its individualised form, so in its Universal form it shows forth the same as Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence. Men, as they show forth more of the one or the other of these aspects, fall into one of three classes, men of thought, men of art, and men of action. And every Religion, being an embodiment of the feeling of that Common Consciousness, shows forth these three aspects also. It is true that, commonly, the word religion brings up the idea of a spiritual aspiration, a Godward emotion, a divine desire, a superphysical art; whereas metaphysics or philosophy may be said to represent the knowledge-side of the same, and concrete science the active, industrial application; yet in its wider and fuller sense Religion comprehends all these. In this sense, we may say that every religion tells its followers - (a) What to think (or believe); (b) What to desire (or feel); (c) What to do. And Theosophy enables us to see that the essential teachings of every religion, in respect of each of these vital questions, are practically the same.

(a) Every religion includes within itself a body of doctrine more or less definitely formulated, a mass of knowledge more or less precisely expounded, relating to the whence, the whither, the how and the why of the visible and invisible worlds, and of the human and other life inhabiting these; and this part is its answer to

the question: "What to think of all this world-process." (b) Every religion again has, as an integral part, a system of ethics or morality, which is its answer to the question: "What to feel or wish for or towards our fellow-creatures." (c) And finally every religion has a more or less elaborate code of sacraments and a general social polity, which is its answer to the question: "What to do to purify and elevate and make ever richer and more beautiful the individual as well as the aggregate physical and spiritual life of human beings."

These are the three ways, of Knowledge, of Devotion, and of Works, which belong to each and every religion, and they are not *separable* from each other, any more than the three aspects of Consciousness. They are only *distinguishable* from one another, and all always necessarily coexist and interweave, all making but One *Threefold* Path which must be trodden by every soul in its passage from the great deep to the great deep of the ineffable bliss and peace of the Divine Life. The dangers of trying to separate the three portions of this *triune* path and follow any one only, and wholly abandon the other two, are very great. Mere knowledge, reasoning, argument, science, unvivified by the living warmth of love, remains essentially incomplete and erroneous, and leads ultimately to that deadly lack of interest, that stony coldness of heart, which is a taste of the isolation of Avichi, the motionless imprisonment of the writhing jinn in the sealed bottles of Solomon. Excessive Devotion, unbalanced, unadjusted, unguided, by Reason, always leads, as history shows a thousand times, to unnatural perversions of emotion, to sex-corruption, hysterics, spiritism, unctuous cant, hypocrisy, nervous diseases of mind and body of all kinds; for love must move either upwards or downwards,

and when, in the course of its spirals, it returns from the upward direction and cannot find the consecrated ways of wedlock in its fleshward journey, it perforce finds tortuous and evil ways for its expression, even as a healthy stream of water, dammed back from its normal course between its natural banks, and not provided with healthier and more serviceable irrigation-channels, overflows the neighbouring lands in harmful ways. Even so, Action uninspired by unselfish Love, unguided by Wisdom, becomes either aimless and meaningless mummery and superstition and ritualism, or positive vice and crime, a fever of restlessness and ruthless ambitions. Therefore all religions which are at all complete, show forth all three sides; they inspire Action with selfless Devotion, and guide both by Wisdom.

Under the subdivision of Knowledge, every religion teaches the existence of One Supreme Spirit, One Self-dependent All-pervading Life, binding together all beings in mutual relationships of duty and dependence. The nature of this Universal Spirit, hidden in the heart of every living thing, and yet also patently manifest in all things, is described in almost the same terms in the crowning teachings of every religion, the Vedānta of Hindūism, the Rahasya teachings of the Buddha and the Jina to their Arhat disciples, the Gnosis of the Christians, the Tasawwuf of Islām. Its conclusive evidence, as well as closest and most primary manifestation, is Consciousness, the immediate consciousness of every living being, Consciousness which proves all things else and which is proved by nothing else than itself. Of It has been declared: "Har che binī bi-dān kī mazhar-i-ū-st," "Whatsoever thou beholdest, know to be but a manifestation of That."

Of It the Upaniṣhats say "Sarvam khalu idaṁ Brahma," "Tatṭvān aśi," "Aham Brahṁ-āsmi," "All this is Brahman," "Thou art That," "I am That also". Of It the great Teachers Shams Tebrez and Mansūr declared . "Haq tu ī" and "Au-ul Haq," "Thou art God, the One Truth and Reality," and "I am That same". The great Islāmic kalemā of faith, "La ilāh' l'illāh," "There is no other God, no other true Being, or Creator, than the One God," is a declaration of the existence of the same One and Supreme Spirit, whose name is That (or rather, Thatness, in Samskr̥ṭ Tat or Tatṭvān, which, as a friend learned in Arabic said, is the literal meaning of the word Allāh). The Christian teaching also is that man is the living "temple of God" and that "I and my Father are one".

This universal belief in the existence of an Eternal Spirit pervading all things, goes with the belief in the obvious appearance of an ever-changing and passing material or objective world, in relation with which the Spirit puts on the triple aspect of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Such a triplicity of mere *aspect* would not be denied even in Islām, which, otherwise, in its insistence on the secondless Unity of the Supreme Spirit, and the repudiation and negation of all other-than-God, lā-ilāh, anāṭma, Not-Self, is as clear and emphatic as Advaita Vedānta.

Another belief common to all religions is the belief in other worlds than this; in other states of individual consciousness than the waking one; in other kinds of experience than those brought to us by the five physical senses. And most of us are beginning to realise to-day that within the infinite powers and possibilities of the Spirit, there might be as much variety in these invisible and

superphysical worlds as in the visible one; or rather, indeed, far greater variety, for the known is infinitely less than the unknown, and yet, also, that which is visible to the eye of flesh every minute all around us, is so very great a miracle that nothing else can possibly be a greater ever and anywhere. The growth of forest-giants from tiny specks of seeds, the ever-blowing winds, the ocean-tides, the whole vast ball of the earth whirling round itself and round the sun in "empty" space with inconceivable velocity, the sun itself with all its planets rushing round some other vaster sun, the countless orbs of heaven shining as points of stronger light in an ocean of milder light—ununderstandable yet plainly visible to the naked eye of flesh on every starlit night—all these are greater "miracles" than, or at least equal "miracles" with, endless grades and shades of subtlety and density of matter.

Yet another common item of belief is the existence of different grades of super-physical beings, dwelling in and governing these different worlds, even as men and animals live in this, all within and under the Absolute Nature and Law and sway of the One Supreme Spirit which lives and moves in all, Devas of high and low degree, Farohars, Elohim, Angels, Cherubs, Seraphs, Sprites, Fairies, Farishtās, Jinns, Parīs, etc.—are the names, given by Hindū, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Pārsī, Hebrew, Christian, Musalmān, to these same spirits, some benevolent, some malevolent to humanity. All religions also believe, more or less clearly, in special manifestations of the Supreme Principle of Consciousness, distinguishable within but not separable from the general manifestations of life, like a mountain amidst hills, like a sun amidst lesser lights. These special manifestations are stated, in the scriptures of those religions which deal with the

subject at length, to be perpetually appearing, and in all kingdoms and on all planes of matter, below as well as above the human and the physical. In the human kingdom, the various religions call them by various names, Avatāras, Āveshas, Amshas, Kalās, Buddhas, Jīnas, Tīrthaṅkaras, Zardushtas, Sons of God, Rasūls, Messengers, Nabīs, Prophets, Saints, Sages, Seers, Poets, Kavis, Rshis, Lināms, Messiahs, Bābs, Heroes, Geniuses, etc., etc. Each name has its own special significance of function and degree. The general principle underlying these special manifestations is that the Universal Self appears in them in an intenser form than in others, on special occasions, for special purposes of (a) teaching, (b) of adjusting and chastening, and (c) leading on by inspiring love. But the difference between the special and general manifestations is ever one of *degree* only, for it is literally true that *all* living things are the children of God, are Spirit of the same Spirit and flesh of the same flesh, are "Avatāras," *descents* of Spirit into Matter, are compounded of the selfsame Spirit and Matter. Looked at thus, the fact of Avatāras becomes divested of all sensational mystery and wonder-working, and is seen to be only one of the facts of nature, and a fact which is much less overwhelmingly astonishing, if at all, than the daily marvels of sunrise and sunset. A homely illustration may perhaps make plain "the mode of operation" of the Principle of Consciousness in such manifestations. In the case of a human individual, when a thorn pierces his foot, while the general vital consciousness pervading and upholding the whole of his body is by no means wholly drawn away from all the other parts but continues to nourish them, yet there is a special concentration of it at the point where the thorn is rankling, and another corresponding concentration in the hand which, guided by (the Principle of)

knowledge (Viṣṇu), travels to that point to remove the cause of the pain. Even so, in the life of a nation, a race, a group-soul, when Sin, Evil, Adharma, Praṭi-nārāyaṇa, the spirit of Negation of the Self, Satan, Kāma-Krodha, the Matterward tendency, Egoism, becomes excessive, then some soul embodying in an especial degree the principle of Virtue and Goodness and Love, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, etc., appears to apply the remedy. Avatāras come to show the way, to erect a standard, to set an example, to be *imitated* with effort and striving; they *do not* come in order to be blindly worshipped. Indeed, many have had occasion expressly to forbid such blind worship of themselves, as tending to retard the Realisation of the Great Self which is the end, Avatāras being but means.

Finally all Religions teach, more or less distinctly, that the human soul, being a portion of the Divine Being, has emanated from it and will go back to it some day, after passing through various experiences of good and ill, virtues and joys, sins and sufferings, in various worlds. Detailed teachings on this periodical descent and re-ascent of Spirit, and the laws governing this evolution and involution of soul and body, through various stages and kingdoms of nature, in birth after birth, are to be found in the mystic traditions and teachings of every great religion, though sometimes preserved secret as *Ilm-i-sīnā*, in the "hearts" and memories of teachers and disciples, and not always published broadcast in the earlier days of the religion to the masses not yet ready to receive them for lack of the needed intellectual growth. But the main law governing all this evolution is accepted unanimously by all religions to be the Law of moral and psychological as well as physical Causation, or Action and Reaction: As ye sow, thus shall ye

reap ; *Sāzā* and *Jāza* ; virtue is rewarded in the end, and vice punished ; the wages of merit are joys, the wages of sin, suffering.

These, in very brief outline, may be said to be the chapters of faith common to that part of the book of any and every religion which deals with the question " What to think ? "

Another part thereof, dealing with the question " What to feel ? " is even more obviously common to all. All religions teach us to feel love for all—in the shape of reverence towards those who are older and greater than we, and in the highest degree for our own Inmost Spirit, the Supreme Self, in the shape of sympathy and affection for those who are equal to us, in the shape of tenderness and pity to those who are younger and weaker and smaller. All other virtues flow from these. And morality, the spirit of Loving Righteousness, is the very heart of Religion, as knowledge is its head, and performance of duty its limbs.

Without this spirit of Loving Righteousness, Religion were like a body without a heart, dead and putrefying and spreading corruption all round.

A high civilisation, being but an aspect of a high religion, is made up of the same three factors. It is built up (a) of great stores of knowledge, of all kinds of science, physical and superphysical ; (b) of active industries and energetic enterprises ; and—even more vitally important than these—(c) of high morals and purity in art. Genuine civilisation and high culture might perhaps be reached with the help of scrupulous morality and fine (as distinguished from vile) art, which always subserves the highest and the noblest desires and emotions of love and devotion and patriotism and heroic courage, even without much

science and without much mercantile and mechanical enterprise, as witness the classic days of Greece. But without these, and even with much science and machinery, we can only have results like those attending the sudden finding of a heavy nugget of gold by a rude miner, *viz.*, drunken carousals and shootings. Without this inmost spirit of religion, without high-minded and spiritual earnestness and purity of character, without benevolence and charitableness and philanthropy, no nation can attain to genuine civilisation, but at most only to that great display of brass and iron and silver and gold which history associates with "barbaric splendour," be the forms taken those of helmet and breastplate and lance and sword, or be they guns and cannon and armoured trains and iron-bound men-of-war.

Indeed, the whole of history, the whole of political science, is but a perpetual illustration of the truths and principles of moral psychology. Pride goeth before a fall, in the nation as well as the individual, for the plain reason that arrogance estranges friends and creates enemies. Honesty is the best policy, for nations as well as individuals, because honesty is born of that sympathy which feels the Divine Life in all, and *therefore* instinctively wishes to do to another as it would be done by, and sympathy produces sympathy and converts enemies into friends. Frankness is the deepest diplomacy, for individuals as well as nations, because frankness inspires equal frankness and confidence in the long run, and where there is confidence there is no further room or need for that endeavour to circumvent, which is the currently understood meaning of the word diplomacy. They who promote strife between others, be they individuals or races, thinking to benefit themselves by the policy "of divide and rule," generally find themselves

unable later on to control the evil spirit of strife when once fully aroused, and come in for blows from both sides impartially ; or find that that spirit, so diligently invoked by them, has ultimately invaded and taken lodgment within their own families and homes and created unquenchable internal dissensions. Hatred ceaseth never by hatred, between men as between nations, though it may possibly be driven underground temporarily by superior might and so compelled to bide its time—but it ceaseth wholly and only by love. Righteousness must prevail in the end between men and between nations, because it makes all loving to each other, and in such a condition of things only is permanence, and not in intrigues and diplomacies. Blessed are the peacemakers only, who studiously promote peace and love all round, amongst all, within their own homes, as well as within and between all other homes ; only theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and not of heaven only but of this earth also, and permanently.

To take an illustration at random from the papers of the day and the country we are gathered in, the new Viceroy of India shows a just appreciation of the fact that a true and righteous psychology is the very foundation of all successful politics and beneficent administration, when he opens his first Council meeting with the expression of the “hope and belief that a *frank* expression of opinion will assist all to understand each other and *appreciate* one another’s point of view,” and “*trusts* that the deliberations of the Council will be animated by a *spirit* of mutual concession and *courtesy*”. And all other great and genuine and high-minded statesmen, all the world over, are also engaged with all their might in promoting *cordiality* and *removing distrust* between the nations, and between the classes within each nation ;

in restraining the smart and supercilious word which it is so pleasant to one's pride to utter, but which flings men and nations into lifelong bitterness and deadly feuds; and in encouraging the kindly and agreeable speech which makes men agree with each other. Truly what cometh out of mouth is far more immediately important than which goeth in (though the latter cannot by any means be neglected), for the fate of nations as of men. And diligent *appreciation* of each other is far more useful, far more "paying," in the common phrase, than depreciation. Thus only may the evil aspects of the spirit of unrest that is now moving over the whole face of the earth be allayed, and its good aspects brought to a just fruition.

Whatever, then, promotes moral and friendly relations between single individuals or between collective bodies of such, is of the very essence of universal as well as special Religion, by whatever name it may be called; for it enables men to realise in life the Common Self of all.

Far more necessary than all else is it to promote this Fellow-feeling. This is why the Scriptures of all times and all nations teach continuously: "God is Love," "Love your neighbour as yourself," "Achieve humility of heart and earnest righteousness of spirit, and all things else will be added unto you". This is why they all say "Faith moves mountains," faith in each other, faith in the potency of co-operation, faith in ourselves, faith in the Divine Spirit surging in all. The nations, the races, the religions, that seek to promote unity or harmony as between their own constituents, sub-races and sects, while fostering contempt of and aggression against, other nations, races, religions as such, indiscriminately—will *never* succeed in bringing about the wished-for harmony

within their own limits. It is not possible to heat red-hot the half of an iron bar and keep the other half cool at the same time. We cannot foster evil emotions towards "foreigners" or "natives," "whites" or "blacks," "browns," or "yellows," and at the same time permanently develop good emotions towards those within the same fold as ourselves. Universal Brotherhood and Religion must pervade all peoples before any one of them can be really happy.

The word Religion has indeed fallen on evil days. That noblest of all words, full of the sense of all-pervading, all-embracing Divine Life and Love, has been so befouled by associations of unhappy priest-craft and bigoted narrow-mindedness and cruelty, that many good men and true, full of the very spirit of Religion, shrink from acknowledging it even to themselves. Even so has that other noble word Loyalty, expressive of the manifestation of the spirit of Religion in action, been so befouled by self-seekers and false flatterers on the one hand and the arrogant claimers of blind obedience on the other, that the men most truly loyal, loyal to Truth, to Science, to Reason, to Art, loyal "to their King as to their conscience and to their conscience as to their King," are ashamed to avow and profess it. But because the gold has become bespattered with mud, we cannot throw it away. We must make it clean and bright as ever before. We must endeavour to restore Religion to its pristine purity and large-heartedness.

For to do so, and to spread this Religion of Love and Universal Brotherhood, is indeed to do the work of all sovereigns, all statesmen, all diplomatists and politicians and administrators put together, and to do it far better than they are doing it to-day. For this is indeed to water the roots; while they are

mostly only washing the leaves at best. And this is why the great Teachers and Founders of religions loom so much larger in the instinctive consciousness of humanity than the other kinds of workers, and are accorded divine honours, and regarded pre-eminently as incarnations of the Divine Spirit, special manifestations and messengers of the God of all nations and all religions, while even the greatest men of thought, men of art, and men of action are regarded as but minor characters in the drama of human history. The re-purification of the human race, time after time, from the gathered dust of decay and degeneracy, by the founding of a new religion—new in name and form and language only, but eternally old in underlying truth—by a new messenger of God, a more concentrated and more powerful manifestation of the Divine Consciousness—has always been followed by a great uprush of material progress and prosperity and the foundation of a new civilisation, of revived and renascent and transformed thought, action and art—only because the religious Spirit of Love has made that co-operation possible without which great civilisations are not possible. The significance of the current conflicts between religions, *i.e.*, between various ideals of life, various ways of living, of thinking, feeling and behaving—is also but this, as said before, that by means of such conflicting ideals, the human racial consciousness is making experiments, and endeavouring to find out which is the best and the fittest for the time, place and circumstance, and the fittest, which will survive in the struggle, will necessarily be that which most promotes co-operation and love and sympathy, and most eradicates all exclusiveness and strife-making pride of too rigid caste and class and mutual dislike and contempt and separation.

We may see thus that the Vedānta, the Gnosis, the Tasawwuf—which teach that the Spirit in all is one and the same, and that *therefore* men should and ultimately must love each other—are not the vain visions of idle dreamers, but the most practical of all practical politics. And the answer of all religions to the question: “What to feel?” is: “Feel love for all and for each living creature, love in its many forms and modifications, each suited to its own corresponding situation in life; and behave to all and each accordingly.”

And this is the second part of the book of every religion; and it is called Ethics.

The third part is the answer to the question: “What to do?” It may be named the “Part of special Rites and Ceremonies and Sacraments, and special directions for the conduct of life, individual and collective”.

These, in their detail, differ in the various religions, given to different peoples living in different countries, and differing more or less in their psycho-physical requirements. They differ as much, and in the same way, as clothes and foods differ with different lands and seasons and states of health and personal needs and individual temperaments. They are of no greater, but also of no less, consequence than these. *Some* clothes are necessary to the civilised man; but it is not absolutely necessary that they should be of any one particular cut and pattern; while a healthy body is absolutely necessary within all kinds of clothes. Even so, while Loving Wisdom is absolutely necessary for all, any particular sacrament or ceremonial or form of courtesy is not absolutely necessary for any one, though *some* is indispensable.

And so, even here, amidst the varying details of ritual, we may discern certain general principles

underlying all schemes. Each Religion has a set of sacraments, some fewer, some more numerous, which may be divided into: (i) ante-natal, (ii) post-natal, and (iii) post-mortem; connected with the three main events of life, *viz.*, birth, marriage and death. The purpose of all these is to purify and consecrate the grosser and subtler bodies, inhabited by the soul, in such a manner as to make its life here and hereafter higher, richer and nobler, and enable it to attain to ever greater and greater perfection and communion with God and Nature.

Each Religion has also some other rites and ceremonies, whereby communion with the inhabitants of other and invisible worlds may be obtained for various purposes.

Each also, to a greater or lesser extent, lays down some directions in the nature of laws of social and domestic polity, assigning various rights and duties, functions and vocations, to different men, of different temperaments, and in different stages of life. All this department of dharma, duties, is essentially relative to time, place and circumstance.

This assignment of occupation and organisation of society was, presumably, in most cases originally based, explicitly or implicitly, on living and elastic data of psychical and physical characteristics, developed by spontaneous variation *as well as* careful selection and cultivation in accordance with the laws of that evolution which includes *both* heredity and origination of new species. But in most cases also the original idea has degenerated, by the lapse of time, from the old, just balance and golden mean, into either the one extreme of a lifeless, ossified, birth-ridden, "touch-and-I-die" caste, or into the other extreme of chaos-making, organisation-destroying

lawlessness, and general levelling down of all by the wilfulness of the least qualified.

But the restoration of the knowledge of essential truths, and of fellow-feeling, of Love and of Wisdom—of which restoration Conventions like these give high assurance—will surely correct the errors of dual extremism in due course on this point also, and bring back again that well-balanced and well-planned social organisation which is the golden mean between excessive regimentation on the one hand and disorder and mob-rule and lawlessness on the other, and whereby each human being will be given the fullest chance of developing the potentialities of good that are within, acquired by birth and heredity or by spontaneous variation, and of occupying thereafter his right place in the Social Household of the Human Family

With this we may close our brief review of the three Parts of every religion and of the Universal Religion of Theosophy.

The three Objects of the Theosophical Society correspond with these also.

To the Part of Knowledge, the Jñāna-Kānda, corresponds the Second Object, *viz.* : “To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science,” whereby the truths common to all religions will be discovered. This is the object which is directly subserved by Conventions and Parliaments of Religions like this, where men of different Faiths have the best opportunities of learning the common as well as the special features of the various creeds, as presented by their most sympathetic and most liberal-minded exponents.

To the Part of Action, or Karma-Kānda, belongs the Third Object, *viz.* : “To investigate the unexplained

laws of nature and the powers latent in man"—whereby the bounds of knowledge will be pushed back further, communication established with what is now invisible and beyond reach, the meaning and purpose of the various systems of ritual become clear, and the life of the physical be rendered richer, purer, finer, by elevation to the superphysical.

To the Part of Love and Devotion, or Bhakti-Kānda, to which all high and real Art corresponds and is subservient, belongs that First and most important Object, the spread of the conscious feeling of Universal Brotherhood, or, in the words of the latest published statements: "To form the nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour."

It may be added here that the Theosophical Society—which now counts over 20,000 members, living in all parts of the world, under some 30 different governments (or, if Colonial governments and States be counted separately, then over 100) and grouped into nearly 800 active Lodges in 18 different Sections—is a Society which "is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of these three Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms, and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of

individual study or intuition and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion." So free is the Society on this point that many of its members keep a perfectly open mind and suspended judgment even with regard to the views that are now generally known to form part of what is called Theosophy. And in this sense Theosophy must be clearly distinguished from the Theosophical Society.

But the majority of the members believe that Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any ; that "it restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants ; and that it illuminates the Scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifies them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition". It inspires Knowledge with Universal Love and Devotion and Brotherhood, it guides and steadily controls Love by Wisdom, and it brings these two together to their just fruit in benevolent Action.

The council of the T.S. has in the press, even now, under the Editorship of Mrs. Annie Besant, the President of the T. S., a *Universal Text Book of Religion and Morals*, modelled on the *Text Book of Hindūism* published by the Central Hindū College of Benares, and therefore divided into three parts which may be distinguished in every complete religion. This paper may fittingly close with a quotation from its Introduction.

"In modern days, the ease and swiftness of communication between the countries of the world no longer permits any religion to remain isolated and unaffected by its neighbours. Thought is more and more becoming international, cosmopolitan, and each

religion is enriching itself by contact with others, giving and receiving fruitful ideas. Nor is this interchange confined wholly within the circle of living religions. Antiquarian and archæological researches have brought to light pictorial, sculptural, and literary relics of religions now dead, belonging to vanished nations and perished civilisations; scholarship has gathered and classified these, and has established on an impregnable basis of facts the truth of the fundamental Unity of Religions. There are fundamental doctrines, symbols, rites, precepts, which are common to all, while the lesser variants are innumerable. It thus becomes possible to separate the essential from the non-essential, the permanent from the transitory, the universal from the local, and to find *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. When this is done, we have remaining a fundamental religious and moral teaching which may fearlessly be given to the young, on the testimony of the religious consciousness of Humanity, as the expression of facts concerning God, Man, and the Universe, borne witness to by the elect of Humanity—the loftiest and purest human beings who have appeared in our Race—and mentioned also in living religions under the names of Vedānta, Rahasya, Gnosis, Tasawwuf, etc., as being capable of reverification by all who reach a certain spiritual stage of evolution . . . Nothing taught in history or science in our schools is endorsed by Teachers so august, and so far apart in time and space to the ordinary view; if we are justified in teaching anything to our children which they cannot verify for themselves, we are justified in teaching them these facts of religion and this moral law.”

Conventions like this help on this work of the separating out of the essential from the non-essential, of the giving of fundamental religious

and moral teaching to the young, and of showing to the world that all men are brothers and that religions unite and do not divide, if interpreted and followed as they ought to be.

And so we end where we began. There *is* a Universal Religion, and it is that which binds together the hearts of all men, and it is the Religion of Love which knows that the Selfsame Spirit lives and moves in all, which therefore extends sympathy to all, and therefore also lives the life of duty, of self-denial and of continual self-sacrifice and helpfulness to others. And it is of this Universal Religion that the Buddha proclaimed the great mandate :

Sound high the trumpet of that true Religion,  
Fling broad the banner of that beautiful Religion,  
Live strenuously the life of that good Religion,  
Which binds the many progeny of God in one.

ॐ

प्रपूरय धर्मशंखं, प्रसारय धर्मध्वजं,  
धर्म कुरु, धर्म कुरु, धर्म कुरु ।

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ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 4

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Proofs of the Existence  
of the Soul

BY

ANNIE BESANT

*A Lecture delivered in Chicago, U.S.A.*

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## Proofs of the Existence of the Soul

IN all ages of the world, among all civilisations and all peoples, there has existed that ineradicable assurance in man which we find expressed in the words of a Roman: "Not all of me shall die." But that conviction is not in the ordinary sense of the word in itself a proof. It might be argued from, as found everywhere and at all times, as apparently being part of human nature; but when I use the word "proof or proofs of the existence of the soul," I do not mean to appeal to that intuition, nor to base my argument on that often-expressed conviction.

I intend to try to lead you step by step along a line of thought upon which the materialist might begin, although he would lose his materialism ere advancing very far; and I want to show you that in dealing with the soul we can proceed from step to step by clear and logical argument, so that the most reasonable

and logical of people may be led gradually to admit the existence of a soul; or, at least, we can carry them at first to this point, that the balance of argument is in favour of such an existence, and that undoubtedly something exists beyond the brain. What that something is, is to be investigated by a different method of study. And this is much, when we can take a materialist and show him that a line of thought and of experiment is open to him which will land him in a position which almost compels him to advance, places him at a point where he can hardly logically stop, and so makes at least a *prima facie* ground which he may take as a platform from which to go further, as offering a sufficiently reasonable hypothesis to encourage a still deeper investigation.

Let us for a moment consider the basis of the materialistic argument with regard to thought and brain. It is an argument that now is falling entirely out of scientific favour, but it held a very high ground among scientific men some five-and-twenty years ago; and at that time you could take up writer after writer amongst the respected scientists of the world, and you would be led by the whole tenor of their argument to conclude that, although they did not say so in so many words, thought was really the production, the result, of matter. Professor Tyndall in

that famous Belfast address, when he was dealing with matter and mind, said, as you may remember, that science would probably have entirely to recast its conceptions of matter; and that is most certainly a true prophecy. Since the Belfast address was delivered, science *has* changed its conception of matter. It no longer gives to it the very narrow definition that it used to give in the days, say, of the youth of many of us. We find that nowadays matter is recognised as existing under conditions that five-and-twenty years ago would have been regarded as excluding the word "material," or as making it inapplicable.

Now, the old argument used to run, if I may just hastily go over it—for it was very familiar to me in the earlier days of my own thinking—that thought was directly produced by the action of the grey matter of the brain; that wherever such matter was found, thought was found in connection with it; that wherever it was not found, thought was absent; and that it was even possible to trace a quantitative relation between the amount of grey matter and the power of the thought. Not only was this put in a general way, but it was worked out with extreme care. You remember the old line along which the development of thought was traced in the growing child; how it was said that if you

took a child's brain, the thought it could produce was infantile in its character; that as the brain developed into boyhood, thought grew stronger; that as the boy grew into a man, thought grew more powerful, more subtle; that as the man reached maturity the thought ripened with the growing maturity of the man; that if at any stage of that man's life the brain was injured, then the thought was changed in its character; that if the supply of blood were injured, say as by any intoxicating liquor, then thought became confused with the confused state of the brain; that if you found fever, so that the blood was in a bad condition, you had delirium affecting the thought; that if a bit of the skull-pan pressed on the brain, at once thought was entirely either changed or disappeared, whereas, when you again lifted that piece of broken bone, thought returned. As the man grew old, thought weakened. When the brain began to decay, thought entirely vanished. If one little piece of the brain was eaten away, the faculty of the mind that expressed itself through that part of the brain disappeared. And then the argument was triumphantly summed up. If thought grows and increases and ripens with the growth and the increase and the ripening of the brain, if it varies with brain conditions, if it vanishes when the

brain is seriously injured, if it grows weaker with the weakening of the brain, if as the brain decays thought-power disappears, can we venture to say that when the brain falls to pieces after death, thought rises triumphant from its ruins and exists in strength and in majesty?

And the argument was a very strong argument, exceedingly strong to anyone who was accustomed to reason from point to point and to follow wherever the process of reasoning led. But the whole of that argument was based on induction. A conclusion can be reached by inductive logic, but there is always one difficulty in connection with any such argument. You must be sure that in any induction the whole of the facts are before you, for one fact omitted from your basis vitiates the whole of your conclusion. If one thing is left out, the whole superstructure falls; and always the weakness of the inductive argument is the possibility of some one fact having been overlooked. Unless you are sure that you know everything in the universe of discourse, inductive logic does not lead you to a certain and final conclusion.

Now, it was by the discovery of facts which were not included in that famous inductive argument, that the whole superstructure fell to pieces. One fact alone would have been enough, but instead of one, hundreds have come to the front.

In any argument which is based on the constant relation between two things, that constant relation must be shown to exist; and if you can get those same two things moving in an opposite direction, varying inversely, then what becomes of your argument? Now that is exactly what has happened in connection with the argument based on brain and thought and their constantly varying together. It has been found that they do not constantly vary together, and still more that they sometimes vary inversely; that is, that you may get a condition where the brain is partially paralysed, but where the thought is very much more active than when it was working in the brain.

Now, in these first steps of my argument I am not going to prove the soul, but I am going to prove that consciousness may exist apart from a physical organism; for it is that which needs to be proved first before a materialist will listen to you at all. There is no good talking about the soul as long as any person is of the opinion that thought is only the product of the brain—to use Carl Vogt's expression—as bile is the product of the liver. So long as a person holds that position, as some people do, you must shake him out of it by facts that he will recognise before you can begin to talk about the soul; and as every one agrees that the soul is

connected with consciousness, if we can show that consciousness exists apart from that constant relation between brain and thought, we shall have made our first step out of materialism, and then we shall feel free to go further on in tracing the nature of this consciousness.

Now, speaking generally, a mass of mesmeric and hypnotic experiments put it beyond the possibility of challenge that intelligence can work when the brain is paralysed.

I prefer in dealing with this question not to take experiments which rest on the evidence of those who might be regarded as people to be challenged, because they are looked on more or less as "cranks," like Theosophists. I had rather take some good scientific man, a materialist, to begin with, because his evidence is so much more satisfactory to his fellow-materialists. Always, if you can, get your opponent to prove your case; to prove your own case out of the mouth of your opponent's witness is supposed to be a triumph, I understand, in legal procedure. I shall therefore summon into my witness-box some of the doctors in Paris who are materialists—they call themselves so; I am not calling them names—but who are utterly unable to account for the results that they have themselves obtained. Quite honestly they say that they do not put forward a theory; they simply record the facts

that they have observed—a perfectly sound and proper position and a very useful one to take up.

Now, amongst their observations—for I have no time to dwell on them long—we find this: they have invented an apparatus which tests the physical condition of the beating of the heart while the patient is in the hypnotic state. They have some admirable instruments by which they can measure exactly the beating of the heart, the movement of the lungs, the contraction of the muscles, and so on. So that by means of this apparatus they can get a perfectly accurate record of the physical conditions of the person under observation, a quite necessary thing when you want to proceed slowly from step to step. The instrument that they generally use is one in which a revolving cylinder, covered with black-lead paper, is set going, with a pencil attached to some part of the patient's body, according to the nature of the observation—attached to a lever, and the lever in turn attached to the body, so that any motion in that part of the patient's body is reproduced by the pencil pressing against the cylinder; as the cylinder revolves the pencil would draw a straight line if there were no motion, but any motion will produce a curve.

Now, suppose you had such a machine attached to your heart, you would get then a series of

curves traced on this black-lead paper showing the beating of the heart, and the slightest irregularity in the heart would at once be marked in a very magnified form in the curves traced by the pencil on this cylinder. So again with any movement of the lungs. There is a definite movement of the lungs and the curve would be recognised by any doctor. So again, if you are dealing with muscular contractions. If you stretch out your arm straight, and you have a weight in the hand, there is action taking place in the muscle—vibrations—and that increases tremendously in activity as the arm is held out longer and longer, the effort increasing with the time of the extension of the muscle.

Now, all these precautions are taken in order to eliminate every possibility of fraud or cheating, so as to get an absolutely accurate physical record of the state of the patient's body; and they have thus shown that when a person is in a hypnotic trance the beating of the heart is entirely changed, and finally reaches a point so slight that although the movement is still shown on the revolving cylinder, no instrument less delicate would show it was beating at all. The same with the lungs; the movement of the lungs is so slight that no breath can be found coming from the lips. So also in regard to muscles. There is a distinct trace which enables them to say whether

or not the man, with the outstretched arm heavily weighted, is or is not in a hypnotic state.

Now, what is the condition of the brain when the body is like that? In the first place the blood-supply is checked. The blood moves very sluggishly through the vessels of the brain and in the tiny vessels, the capillary vessels, its movement is stopped. Not only is the supply of blood in this way entirely changed in its motion, but the blood is very bad of its kind, for as it is not properly aired in travelling through the lungs, it is very much overcharged with all the products of decomposition, and you have quantities of carbonic acid. The result of that is very well known. It brings about a state of coma, a state in which no thought is possible, so far as the brain is concerned. So that we get a person who cannot think with the brain. The brain is stopped. It is placed in a state in which anyone, twenty-five years ago, would have said thought is impossible. You have brought about a physical condition in which thought must vanish; and so it does, so far as that physical body is concerned. The creature lies there as though he were dead; but you are able to reach him without altering these physical conditions; you are able to obtain from him mental results, and when a person is in that state you can show that his mental faculties are immensely stimulated, that

his memory has quite changed its character; that he can tell you incidents of his childhood which in his normal state had quite passed from him; that he will sometimes speak a language which he heard as a tiny child and has since entirely forgotten, so that if it is spoken in his presence he is not able to understand it. You will find that the memory is so intensified in its immediate action, leaving the past out of sight, that if you take up a Greek book and the man is ignorant of Greek, and you read over a page from that book, he will repeat it word for word without a blunder. Wake him up and he cannot say it, cannot pronounce a single syllable. Throw him back into the hypnotic state, and he will repeat it over again and again. Not only have you thus a very different kind of memory, but you also can obtain a far higher grade of intelligence. A person who is stupid in his waking consciousness is often clever when he is under hypnotic control; not that he reproduces the thought of the hypnotiser, as indeed he will do if he is made to, but he will dwell on things where the hypnotiser is thinking on other lines, and will argue with him. Cases are on record where a man abnormally stupid has shown acuteness in his argument when he is in a state in which the brain cannot work. And so over and over again you get placed on record these observations

of abnormal knowledge, manifested when the brain is rendered incapable of sane and healthy thought.

The next thing that you remark in dealing with such a person is that you can entirely deceive the senses, and make them give reports which are absolutely erroneous; that you can make him see what is not visible; and you can equally easily make him not see what is visible; that, for instance, you can make yourself invisible, and if you like you can leave yourself tangible but invisible, so that he may walk right up against you as though you were not there, and start when, coming against you, he finds an obstacle that he cannot see. So you can alter the sense of hearing, you can make him hear or not hear, as you please. So you can, if you like, destroy the sense of touch so that he shall not feel, or you can do the opposite and you can make him feel a solid body by simply stating that it lies between his hands. You can make him smell a sweet odour when you present to him some repulsive article. You can play with the senses as you can stimulate the mind. You can prove still more than this by taking an ordinary person and thus hypnotising him.

I now pass from the Paris hospitals to statements made by doctors in care of the insane asylums. If you take an ordinary lunatic and throw him into the hypnotic state, you can

obtain from him in some cases intelligence and reasoning power. The moment he is out of that condition he is again a lunatic, but under hypnotism he becomes an intelligent thinker.

Now, these things are done over and over again. Suppose you prove that instead of thought varying with the state of the brain it varies against it; that when the brain is in a state of coma, thought is exceptionally active; that when the brain is paralysed, memory is exceptionally acute and brings back events that are long forgotten; what is the inevitable inference? That although thought may continually be expressed through the brain, it is also possible to express it without the brain; that although it is true that many events remain in the normal memory and others are forgotten, those forgotten events are not really forgotten; they remain in consciousness, although out of sight; they can be brought up by consciousness, although normally they have vanished. So that you are led inevitably by these observations, which can be repeated indefinitely, to realise that human consciousness is something more than is expressed through the physical brain.

I am not going to press the argument one bit beyond that, for the moment, but you can prove to demonstration that there is more consciousness in a man than comes out in his waking moments when the brain is in its normal state of activity;

that he has a consciousness wider than the waking; that under abnormal conditions this consciousness emerges; that it contains the record of events that the waking consciousness has forgotten; that it is able to exercise powers keener and subtler than the powers of the waking consciousness. So that you finally come to the conclusion that whatever human consciousness may be—and on that at present we will not dogmatise—that whatever human consciousness may be, it is something more than that which we know in our healthy waking moments, and that there is more of us than is expressed through the brain, that we are able to produce more in consciousness than our brain allows us to express; and so we arrive at the rather startling conclusion that the brain is a limitation placed on our consciousness; a partial instrument, instead of the producer, of thought.

That is, we have entirely reversed the materialistic position. Instead of the brain producing thought, thought expresses itself partially through the brain. As much of it as can get through comes through, and the rest remains for the time unexpressed but not non-existent. This is so much recognised now that all these French schools will divide consciousness, and tell you about the waking consciousness and the dream consciousness, that which is called the subliminal

consciousness. There are all sorts of wonderful terms, which I sometimes think do more to cover ignorance than to express knowledge, and we constantly find the most wonderfully complicated expressions which are intended to convey the idea that I have put into rather rough phrase, that there is more of us in consciousness than comes through the brain.

Now, all these discoveries have very much intensified scientific investigation along the lines of this consciousness which does not work in the physical brain; and you have men like James Sully, men like Sidgwick, who are leading English writers on psychology, giving a very large part of their time to the state of the consciousness which is outside the waking. Why, some years ago, if people had studied dreams, they would have been thought as foolish as Theosophists are thought now; but to-day the study of dreams is highly scientific. You need not be the least afraid of losing your character as sane and rational people by the study of dreams. On the contrary, you will only be advanced people, going along the lines of the most advanced science, rather, in fact, beyond your neighbours than below them in intelligence; and this has been the result of finding out how much is to be learned by studies of the dream state; and that is our next step.

Now, there have been certain very interesting physiological measurements made, and if science is good at anything it is good at measuring. It is extraordinary the way modern science measures, the accuracy, the delicacy of it, the way in which by its balances it will weigh, I am afraid to say how tiny a fraction of a grain; and there is nothing in which science has made more remarkable advance than in the exquisite delicacy of its instruments whereby it measures what would seem immeasurably minute results. And another thing that is admirable is the wonderful patience of these scientific investigators. Clifford once spoke of the sublime patience of the investigator; and the term is not misapplied. Their patience really is sublime. They will do the same minute experiment over a hundred, or two or three hundred, times in order to be sure that they are right; and I hold that to be a most admirable quality, both mentally and morally; morally, because it implies that love of the truth which will take unending pains before it will make an assertion or accept the record of a fact; and I say this all the more strongly because it is sometimes thought that Theosophy is against science. That is not so. We give the fullest admiration and homage to the patience and the care, the reverence for truth, shown by the modern scientific men. All

we object to is when they make inferences too hastily, and then assert their inferences as definitely as they assert their facts. Then we get rather into quarrels sometimes with them, because we cannot take all the inferences they make, knowing as we do that the inferences are based on incomplete knowledge of the facts.

Now, one of the things that science has been measuring is the rate of the nervous wave in the physical organisation—how long it takes for a wave to pass along nervous matter, to be transmitted from cells to cells—a fairly difficult thing to observe, I mean with the accuracy with which it has been done; but some of our German friends, especially, who are nothing if they are not accurate, have gone very carefully into these measurements. They have found out the fraction of a second which it takes for a wave or vibration in nervous matter to occur, so that they are able to tell us exactly just how long it takes for such a wave of nervous motion to travel, and that means how many such waves can occur in any given track of nerve within a second of time. They can tell how many such vibrations can be received in a second. Let us suppose for the moment—for the number does not matter for our purpose—let us suppose that they found that nervous matter could receive a hundred vibrations per second. You know that

the nervous matter of the eye, for instance, if it receives vibrations within less than one-tenth of a second, yields a continuous impression. If your impressions come at more than that rate you get then a continuous line. If you get an impression separated from others by more than one-tenth of a second, you see that impression by itself. Now apply that to the states of consciousness of the later investigations, and you find that a certain number of impressions can be made on the nerve, representing states of consciousness, or succession of thoughts. Let us suppose that a hundred of these can take place in one second. Now go to sleep and dream, and within one second of physical time you may have thoughts experienced by the intelligence at the comparative rate of four or five thousand or more in the second. You may live in the dream consciousness through a year, and every event may be there; you may go through them one after another; day after day, and night after night, you may experience successive events, you may live through troubles and joys; all these intellectual results may be experienced, and when you are awaked one second of physical time only has passed, and yet you have gone through states of consciousness that the nervous system would demand a year to accomplish. Nevertheless you have thought; those states of

consciousness 'have existed; you are able to recall them, and they have gone at this immense rate; your intelligence has been working at a hundred times the normal rate. What does that mean? It means that it has been working in a finer kind of matter. The finer the matter, the more rapid the vibrations; the finer the matter, the more vibrations can you get in that second. If you are dealing with ordinary nervous matter it moves comparatively slowly. If you are dealing with ether it moves at a tremendous rate; and if you are dealing with matter finer than ether, then inferentially the rate would be increased proportionately to the fineness of the matter in which the vibrations were set up.

If then you are able to think at a rate beyond your power of thinking in the brain, it means that your intelligence is functioning in something finer than the brain. I do not want to press it one bit further than it goes, but it does prove to demonstration that your intelligence is working in a medium finer than nervous matter. Whatever that medium is, it is very different from the nervous matter of the brain. It may be super-ethereal, as a matter of fact it is, but we are content to take up the position, that, whatever it is, it vibrates hundreds of times faster than any nervous matter can vibrate, and therefore the intelligence

has some form of expression which is not an expression by the brain. This is the point to which you are led by an argument in which no flaw can be picked. It is the first time that science has given an argument, clear and definite and impregnable, which proves beyond possibility of challenge that intelligence in man does work at a rate which the brain is unable to satisfy, and therefore whatever intelligence is and does, the medium in which it is able to function is something other than brain.

Well, so far we have gone on ground that no materialist can deny. Our next step is to show that this intelligence which is not dependent on the brain, which is able to work without it, which works better without it than it does with it, more swiftly without it than it does with it, more keenly and acutely without it than it does with it—to show that that intelligence survives death. And see how carefully we are going step by step. We are not hurrying in any way; we are not rushing over it; we are only taking the next very quiet little step. We have intelligence working without the brain while the brain is still, as, you may say, in touch with that intelligence possibly; and now we are going to kill our physical brain altogether, and see whether the intelligence that functioned in it during physical life

can be found functioning without it after physical death. And here, of course, people who believe in immortality have put themselves at a great disadvantage with the logical materialist by making the life of the soul to begin at birth; because it is obvious that if the soul cannot manifest at birth without a body, then it seems as though it were likely that it could not get on without a body, and so death would very much paralyse its action. That is due to a lack of philosophy which has been allowed to weaken much of our religious thought; and the giving up of the reasonable philosophy of reincarnation, or pre-existence of the soul, has struck the most deadly blow at all belief in the soul's immortality. Making it dependent on the body for its manifestation, we imply its dependence on the body for its further persistence. However, leaving that point out, because it need not necessarily come into our argument, we shall get the next definite proof from the experiments of our spiritualistic brethren, or of such men as Professor Crookes, who, although he has always refused to identify himself exactly with the spiritualistic body, has yet convinced himself, by his own careful experiments, of the truth of many of their assertions. He is a very cautious man, and he does not use the word "spirit"; but he does show that intelligent entities, after they

have been living in a physical body, do again function out of that body. Of course it is not necessary that the body should have perished by death, but in most of these cases, as a matter of fact, it has. If any of you will take the trouble to turn to Professor Crookes' investigations, in which he had the medium and what is called a materialisation—materialised soul, it is called, but that is a very silly expression—a materialised form present under his eyes at the same time, and read them carefully, you will be obliged to admit that there is evidence there worthy of further consideration. Of course if you have not read anything of the kind nor looked into it yourself, you will probably deny the possibility off-hand, because that is one characteristic of people—that the less they know about a thing the more emphatically do they deny it. It is a great advantage to know nothing when you want to be what an English schoolboy would call "cock-sure". I don't know whether you have the phrase over here, but it is an ordinary bit of schoolboy's slang, and it always goes hand in hand with ignorance; but I never find it in the scientific man. He is always cautious. He says: "Well, I don't believe it; I don't think your evidence is enough." He won't deny it; whereas the ignorant person will deny with a vigour proportioned to the depth of

his ignorance. Now I am supposing that somebody is willing to read; does not think he knows everything in nature; does not believe that everything within the universe is within the limit of his knowledge. If a person has reached that not very advanced position, he may condescend to look into the evidence afforded by a man like Crookes. He has, for investigating materialisations, invented a convenient little lamp which lights as soon as it is opened. The reason why he used that particular kind of light was that it is very difficult to produce a materialisation under the light-waves coming either from gas or electric light. It is far easier to produce it in the dark. Now, of course, many people begin to laugh the moment that is said; they say: "Oh, yes, because it is fraudulent." That is not so; an electrician cannot produce an electric spark from his machine in a very damp atmosphere; and if you said: "Oh, that is only because you want to commit fraud," he would laugh at you. So it is true that there are certain combinations of matter which do not hold together under the vibrations of ether set up by certain kinds of light. That is all the reason. It is merely that certain wave motions break up these aggregations of ethereal matter.

Now Crookes, being a chemist and an electrician, was too much instructed to take it for

granted that the only reason why darkness was demanded was fraud. He thought there might be some other reason, and he invented a particular kind of lamp—some preparation of phosphorus it was—that the materialisation might take place in the dark, and that then by just opening the door of his lamp, the air would touch the preparation of phosphorus, and it would burn up and give light, so that all in the room would be clearly visible. He did this, and under these conditions he was able to see the medium lying on the sofa and touch the medium with one hand, the medium being dressed in black, while in front of him within his reach, and he allowed to touch it, there stood the materialised form in white; so that he had the two under his eyes at the same time; no curtains or dark cupboards or anything else, but the two there in full sight at the same time, and he was allowed to handle both of them together.

Now, that is evidence good enough for any reasonable person, if you can trust the accuracy and the honesty of the investigator; and I venture to say William Crookes' name is beyond all challenge for honesty, and beyond all challenge for accuracy of observation amongst scientific people, who know the kind of experiments that he has made.

Well, in addition to a number of experiments like that, he weighed some of these forms, and

he made other machines which enabled him to test the force that could be exercised without any visible force being used, and so on; so that he was able to show definitely an intelligent entity able to recall the events of the past life, holding long conversations with him after death had been passed through.

And that experience—not always with such care, to make it scientifically certain—has been repeated over and over again by thousands of spiritualists. It is foolish to deny these facts. They are on record, and if you choose may be re-verified if you are doubtful. Fraudulent occurrences have also taken place, but to deny all materialisations because of these is as though you were to deny that there is any such thing as good money, because coiners circulate false coin. Such events do occur, and anyone who goes into it knows that they occur; and I say that although I do not approve of that line of investigation, although I think it dangerous and mischievous, none the less, if the person be a materialist and has been led up to the point that we reach by the study of hypnotism and by the study of dreams, he may very well then clinch, as it were, his growing convictions by getting, or much better, by himself trying some experiments along these lines. He need not go to a medium, as three or four people of the

same family, sitting together, will very easily be able to convince themselves that intelligence does exist and function on the other side of death. That very simple fact can be proved over and over again, and it is not necessary to go to any professional medium; any three or four of you, who know each other as honourable men and women, may, if you choose, prove it for yourselves. I do not advise you to do this unless you are materialists. If you are, it is worth the risk for the certainty. If you are not, if already you believe in the existence of the soul, then you won't gain very much as to the nature of its existence in that way; and it is foolish to run into danger where there is no equivalent gain. But none the less we are led up here, step after step, to the existence of intelligent entities whom we knew in the body and may know out of the body.

Another line of investigation here, unaccompanied by danger, is based on the fact that the soul of a person connected with a living body can pass out of that body by training, and assert itself independently of the body, both as regards itself and, if it choose, as regards others.

Now I am going a step outside the line which science would recognise or which can be verified easily by anyone. I am going now into the more difficult experiments in regard to the existence

of the soul.' These that I have dealt with hitherto, anybody can repeat. They are the A B C of the study. If you are materialists, begin with these and when you have gone through them you will have convinced yourself that a living intelligence can function without the assistance of the brain in or out of the physical body. You will have gone so far, and when you have reached that, you may be willing to take the trouble necessary for the more difficult experiments that follow, those which alone prove the existence of the soul, though the others prove the existence of intelligence outside the physical organism.

I am now going further. I mean by the soul a living, self-conscious intelligence, showing forth mental attributes at will, and able to show forth attributes higher than mental as it grows, develops and asserts itself on higher planes than the physical and the astral. As I say, the experiments now are very difficult, and training is wanted. The beginning of training along this line of work, which leads us really into what is called the practice of Yoga, is first to use your mind to control your body and your senses, so as to convince yourself that the mind is something higher than the body, more powerful than the senses. Set yourself to work to check some expression of the senses to which you

habitually have yielded; cease taking some article of food that is very attractive; drop some form of drink that is very pleasurable and stimulating; leave off some form of physical pleasure to which you are particularly addicted. I do not mean give it up altogether, but give it up for a time, to show that there is something in you, to prove to yourself beyond possibility of dispute that there is something in you that can control all that part of your nature which you call the senses or the bodily expression. Make yourself do a thing against the desire of the senses, and choose a time when the sense is rampant, when it is longing for that particular gratification, eager to have it, when the thing is right in front of you, and you are just putting out your hand to grasp it. Stop and say: "I am stronger than you; you shall not gratify that desire." The only use of the experiment is that it convinces you, as nothing else does, that you are not your senses, and not your body; that you are something higher—let us say for the moment, the mind—and that you can control this body and these senses that very often run away with you. I do not mean that you can always control them; you cannot until you practise; there will be times when the senses, like unbroken horses, will, as it were, take the bit in their teeth and run away with the mind and everything else, and you

plunge right' after them; they carry you off, but you know even then that they are carrying you off, and you feel that they are stronger than you, and are having their way. In a sort of upside-down fashion, even then you will distinguish between yourself and the wild headlong influences and impulses that hold you captive for the time.

Now, that is a very elementary experiment, but you had better do it so as to be sure there is something in you stronger than the senses. "Oh," you say, "yes, that is the mind. Of course I know my thoughts are above the senses; of course I know that my mind can control my body." All right, keep on doing it, and practise until the body is no obstacle at all; until you can starve all day long and be perfectly good-tempered, even to the last moment; until you can be very tired and exhausted by physical labour and be as bright and even-tempered and sweet-natured to a troublesome child as if you were as fresh as possible. That is what is meant by controlling the body. Keep on practising until you can do it. It is not much. Keep on doing it until you realise that your body is only your servant, or slave, acting or not acting as you like, and feel the sense of shame when the body is able to make you do what the mind condemns; feel that to do that is to be less than

man, less than really human. Dogs snap when they are hungry or angry; human beings ought to be able to be self-controlled; and it is not much to ask that the man shall have control, which only means, after all, that his mind is the master of his body.

So far, then, we shall all agree. Let us suppose that you are now ready to take the next step. That mind of yours is a troublesome thing, after all. It is able to control the body; it is able to control the senses. Is it able to control itself? You find it runs all over the place. You take up a very difficult book and you want to master that book. A good deal depends on your mastering it. Perhaps you are going to pass an examination. Unless you can master that book in the night-time, you will fail, and that will throw you back in your career; so you sit down and work at it; but your mind wanders; when you want to concentrate on some mathematical problem, you are thinking, you find, of something quite different; your mind goes off and you have to bring it back; and this happens over and over again, and you put your book down and you say: "Oh, I am not in the humour; I cannot do it." What sort of a mind is that? It won't work when it is wanted, and it can't do what is its special business, because it is not in the humour. And then you begin to say: "Why shouldn't I control

the mind?" And in that very phrase you are asserting something that is higher than the mind—I. "I mean that this mind shall do what I want it to do, and shall be fixed on that book." You concentrate your attention; you gather up something which is strong in you, and you fix the mind on that subject and you work at it. What is it that has done it? It can't be the mind that has done it, which has been running all over the place. It is something that is there which is able to master the mind, and train it to that point where it is wanted to work. Then you feel: "That is the thing I am going to look for now. I have found that the mind is above the senses—I know that; but here is something which is above the mind, and I must go in search of that. Perhaps that is the soul. This force that I feel, which masters my vagrant mind, this strength that I find within myself, which groups my wandering thoughts and compels their obedience, what is that? That seems to be myself. I am controlling my mind." When that point is reached, and when the habit has been formed, so that the mind can be fixed on a thing at order, there will have grown up a definite consciousness of a something which is behind that mind and masters it, as the mind did the senses, and then the student may think it worth while to take steps to find out what that

something is. Generally he will have to ask somebody who has gone a little further in this than he has: "What is the next step that I ought to take? I find something here which is higher than, more than, the mind. How am I to find out what it is?" And in some book that he reads, or from some one whom he meets who can explain it to him, he learns that there exist certain practices, definite practices—what are called meditation—by following out which one can develop that consciousness which is higher than the mind.

When a person has reached this point, if no other person comes in his way, you may be sure that he will find a book; he will take up the book in the public library and read it; or some friend will say: "Have you seen that book?" and will introduce the book to him. Somehow or other the book will come in his way. Why? Because there are always more advanced souls watching to see when any evolving soul reaches the point where it can take help, where it is ready for further help; and if there is not available some one in the physical body who can give the help that that soul wants, then it will be directed to the finding of the book where the practical teaching will be given. It is the action of the helpers of men, who come with a helping hand to that seeking soul and place within

its reach the knowledge that is the next step in its experiments, and rules for meditation will be found, studied and practised, and when those rules are studied and practised what happens is this: That with each day's meditation, the consciousness beyond the mind grows stronger and stronger, more and more able to assert itself, more and more, as it were, revealing itself, until presently the whole centre of consciousness will be shifted upwards, and the man will realise that he is not at all his mind, but a great deal more than the mind, and he will then begin to sense things that the mind cannot sense, become conscious of thoughts that the mind is unable to appreciate; and now and then there will come down a great rush, as it were, of thoughts that dominate the mind and that the mind is unable to explain, although it realises them as true when once they are presented to it. And then arises the question: "I did not argue myself up to this; I did not reach it by logic; I did not reach it by argument; I did not reach it by thinking. It came to me suddenly. Whence did it come?" And the consciousness arises slowly: "It came from myself; that higher part of myself which is beyond the mind, and which in the quiet of the mind is able to assert itself." For, as has often been said, just as a lake unruffled by the wind will reflect sun, or mountain,

or flowers, but ruffled gives only broken images; so when the mind is quiet the higher thought is reflected in the lake of the mind, but as long as the winds of thought blow over it, it is ruffled, and only broken images are seen.

In the quiet of the mind, then, the higher thought asserts itself.

Then comes another stage, a higher stage. The student tries more and more to identify himself with the higher thought; gropes after it, as it were; tries to feel it as himself; concentrates his efforts and keeps the mind absolutely still; and at some moment of that experience, without warning, without effort, without anything in which the lower mind takes part, suddenly the consciousness will be outside the body, and the man will know himself as the living consciousness looking at the body that he has left. Over and over again in different Scriptures this statement is found. You may read, for instance, in one of the Hindū Scriptures, that a man should be able to separate the soul from the body as you may separate grass from the sheath that enfolds it. Or, in another phrase, that when the man has dominated the mind, he rises out of the body in a brilliant body of light—a statement literally true. The body in which the soul arises is luminous, radiant, glorious exceedingly—a body of light. No words could better explain this

appearance, no phrase more graphically describe the man rising out of the physical body in the astral or in some higher body.

I quote that ancient Scripture in order that you may not for a moment imagine this is simply a modern investigation. All those who know the soul have passed through that experience. It is the final proof that the man is a living soul; not argument, not reasoning, not inference, not authority, not faith, not hearsay, but—knowledge. “I am this living consciousness, and that body I have left is only a garment that I wore. It is not I; it is not myself. That is not I, I am here; that I have thrown off; I have escaped from it; I am free from it.” And that experience mentioned in those ancient Scriptures is mentioned in other Scriptures, too; it is the invariable experience of the prophet, and the teacher, and the seer, for none can truly teach the things of the soul, except by his own knowledge. So long as he is only repeating what intellectually he has learned, he may do a most useful work, but he has not that stamp of first-hand knowledge which carries conviction with it to those whom he teaches. Second-hand knowledge is always liable to be challenged. Questions may be asked which it is almost impossible to answer, if you are only repeating what you have learned intellectually. A necessary stage; I am not

speaking against it. All go through it who reach the other. But if the world is still to have witnesses of the immortality of the soul; if the world of the nineteenth century is to have what the world has had in all other ages, the first-hand testimony of living souls that they know that they exist; then men in the nineteenth century must go through the same training that they have gone through in other times, for only thus is first-hand knowledge attainable, and the question of the existence of the soul is put for evermore beyond possibility of doubt or of challenge.

The first time, there may be a sense of bewilderment, or confusion, or wondering what this strange thing is that has happened; but as it is repeated day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, that consciousness outside the body becomes real—far more real than that within the body; for, coming back into the body time after time, the soul experiences that entering the body is like going into a prison-house; that it is like leaving the open air and going into a cellar or a vault; that the sight is dimmed; that the hearing has grown almost deaf; that all the powers of the soul are limited and deadened, and that this body is indeed as S. Paul, the great Initiate, called it, the body of death, not the body of life.

We call *this* life; it is not life at all. We call it life; it is simply the limited, imprisoned, dull, dwarfed existence which the soul endures for a short time of its experience in order to gain certain physical knowledge which otherwise it would be unable to acquire for lack of suitable instruments. But as you become men of meditation, that higher life becomes your vivid, real life and *this* life becomes a sort of dream, recognised as an illusion, as duties that have to be discharged, obligations that have to be paid, where much has to be done; but the world is a world of prison, of death—not the world of freedom, of life; and then we realise that we, ourselves, are that living, active, powerful, perceiving intelligence to whom the worlds lie open, for whom heaven is the native land, the natural and rightful dwelling-place.

These are the lines along which we pass to the final proof of the existence of the soul. See how gradual the stages have been; how we began on the physical plane with physical experiments; how we passed on then a little into the region of dreams, and action outside the body; how then we took up the question that we recognise by use the difference between the body, and the senses, and the mind; and then how we found the assertion of something beyond that mind more real and more powerful

than itself; and then how, encouraged by those lower experiments, we penetrated into the higher, and paid the price which is necessary for that first-hand knowledge of the soul.

Truly, it is worth while. I do not pretend that it can be gained without paying the price. I do not pretend that you can enjoy vehemently the life of the body and the senses and the mind, and at the same time carry on this evolution of the higher life; but this I tell you, that all that you lose is merely the pleasure which you have outgrown, which therefore no longer attracts you. You lose that in the way that you lose your toys when you grow out of childhood; you do not want them. It is not that anyone takes them away from you or breaks them; you do not want them any longer; you have found a higher enjoyment, toys of a finer kind. But the mind is also a toy, though finer than the toy of the senses; that also is recognised as a toy in the higher regions of the life. Gradually then, you give up those pleasures; they have lost their savour; but you perform your duties better than you have performed them before. Don't fall into the mistake that some people do when they begin meditating, of going about the world in their waking life in a fog, in a dream, abstracted, so that everybody says: "Why, that person is losing his mind!" That is not

the way to meditate. Meditation makes men more effective, not less keen, not blinder: more alert, not less alert, less observant. The stage wherein people are dreaming is a very early stage of the training of the mind, when they are still so weak that they cannot manage their mind at all; and I have noticed over and over again, if I take for a moment a personal illustration, that I, who have done a good deal in this way of meditation, who have trained myself carefully along the road that I have been pointing out to you, I often notice when I am with people who have never dreamed of this at all, and who call themselves quick, observant people of the world, that I see things that they miss, observe things that pass them unobserved, notice all kinds of tiny things in the streets, in the railway cars, in people, which pass by them without making the slightest impression. And I only mention that to show you that it is not necessary to lose the powers of the lower mind, while you are busy evolving the higher. The fact is, you have them much more at your command, and just because you do not wear them out by worry, and fuss, and anxiety, they are much more available when you want to use them; indeed, common sense is very marked, and reason, logic, intelligence, caution, prudence, all these qualities come out strongly and brilliantly in the true Occultist.

The man becomes greater and not less on the mental plane, because he works in a region beyond and above the intellect. He has gained in life. He is not robbed of the lower life; he has lost it, and in losing it he finds it. Resigning the lower, he finds the higher flowing into him fully, and the lower is more brilliant than it ever was before. He asks for nothing: everything comes to him. He seeks for nothing; all things flow to him unasked. He makes no demands; nature pours out on him her treasures. He is ever pouring forth all that he possesses. He is always full, though ever emptying himself.

Those are the paradoxes of the life of the soul; those the realities proven as true, when the existence of the soul is known, and if tonight I have not tried to win you by mere skill of tongue or picture, or what would be called appeals to emotion and feelings, it is because I wanted to win your reason step by step along this path; because I wanted to show you—without emotion, without appeals to intuition, without making, as I might make, appeal to that knowledge within every one of you—that you are immortal existences and that death is not your master. Instead of appealing to that, as I have the right to appeal to it, I have led you step by step along the path of the reason; I have shown you why you should take each

new step when the others behind are taken. But let me, in concluding, say a word to those who do not need to take the lower steps of this toilsome path, who do not need to prove that the soul exists, who are filled with the consciousness that they are living souls, who, though they know it not first hand, by knowledge, yet have a deep, undying conviction that no logic can shake, no argument can alter, no scoff can vary, no jeer and no proof can change. Beaten in argument, confused by logic, bewildered by proof, they still say: "I feel, I know, I am a living soul." To those I would say: trouble not yourselves about the lower steps; trouble not yourselves with all the arguments I was using as proof over and over again reiterated, intended to convince the materialist. Trust your intuition, and act on its truth. The inner voice never misleads. It is the Self whispering of its own existence and imperially commanding your belief. Yield your belief to the voice within. Take it for true, though you have not proved it as true, and act on that internal conviction as though it were true. Then begin the processes of meditation to which I hastily alluded. Take, as you may take, the books where these are traced out for you one by one. Begin to practise them. Do not waste any more time in reasoning out other processes that you are

not ready to understand. Trust the voice within you. Follow the guidance which has been marked out for you by those who have trodden that road and have proved it to be true. Then swiftly and easily you will gain the knowledge. Then, without long delay, you will know of your own knowledge that these things are true. If the soul speaks to you, don't wait for the confirmation of the intellect. Trust the divine voice; obey the divine impulse; follow out the road traced by sages, by prophets, by teachers, verified by disciples who, in the present day, have trodden it, and know it to lead to the rightful goal. Then you, too, shall know; then you, too, shall share; then your intuition shall be confirmed by knowledge, and you shall feel yourselves the living, the immortal soul. That is my message to you then, to those who need not the proof, and appeal to the intuition; and in giving you the message, I speak not of myself; in giving you the message, I bring you no new thing; I confirm to you in your own day and time, what every prophet has asserted, what every disciple has taught, what every divine man has proclaimed. As a messenger of that Brotherhood, I do but repeat Their message.

There is the weight of the evidence, and not in my poor reassertion of it. What is it that one soul should have found to be true, that which

all the great souls have declared? If you would have authority, take it on their word. Remember that what I speak is indeed spoken with my lips, but with Their voice; I bring to you the testimony of the ages; I bring to you the message from an innumerable company. I, but weak and poor in my own knowledge, limited and circumscribed in my own experience, servant of that great Brotherhood, holding it the proudest privilege and delight to be able to serve and to give my obedience, I speak Their word. I do not dare to endorse it, as it were, though knowing it to be true. I put it on Their testimony, unshakable, immovable, back to the furthest antiquity, down to the present day, an unbroken army of mighty witnesses, an innumerable company of prophets, of teachers, of saints. Their messenger, I speak Their message. You can prove its truth for yourselves, if you will.



# ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 5

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## THE EMERGENCE OF A WORLD-RELIGION

*A Lecture delivered to the League of  
Liberal Christianity at Manchester on 23rd of May, 1911*

BY

ANNIE BESANT

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# The Emergence of a World Religion

I THOUGHT of speaking to you, first, of the great difference between the world of thought to-day and the world of thought as it existed in previous ages with regard to religion; then to ask the question whether the next step forward is to be of the nature of a synthesis, a building together, or whether there will be an effacement of differences, rather than unity amid diversity; and then to see if we can find any clue to a plan which the world unconsciously has been following both in its religions and in its civilisations, a plan that man does not make but unconsciously carries out, as a great temple may rise under the work of the builder, the painter, the sculptor.

Just as we know that behind that rising temple, with its multitudes of workmen, there stands the architect who planned it and marked out the various departments of the work that he gave over to be finished one by one, so behind the great crowd of human workers, behind the nations in their rising

and their falling—the nations that are building the great temple of a divine humanity—there stands the great Architect of the universe whose plan is being carried out by the multiplicity of workers. Now, are there signs to-day of a possible coming together of the many religions of the world? In the chaos of controversy and in the battle-shocks of warring creeds can we distinguish the possibility of a Unity which shall make all this war into peace, and build the fragments into one splendid whole?

Let us glance backward into the far-off past, down to about two thousand years ago. Religions were national wherever you found them over the surface of the globe. The Indian then had the Hindū faith; the Persian, the Zoroastrian; the Greek, the Egyptian, and many other still older nations of the world, each had its faith; each nation's religion was a national religion. While you found religions living fairly peacefully side by side, when a man left his national religion he was regarded more as traitor to the State than as a heretic to the faith; that you may see over and over again in looking over the past.

You do not find any attempt in the older world on the part of one nation to convert the people of another faith within their borders. The many religions of the world stood side by side, worked side by side, and the nation and the faith were practically indistinguishable. It is not without interest (I am digressing for a moment from the historical retrospect) that

the theory of the Church of England to-day is the same as that ancient thought. The Church of England in theory is a national Church; everyone who is born into the English people is in theory born into that national Church, and the State and the Church are thought of as conterminous. I say, in theory, because you know how different the practice is in this country; but in the older days theory and practice went together, and only now and again, as, say, among the Hebrews, a few proselytes were made from some of the surrounding nations. Speaking generally, then, faiths were national, and you find that the polity, the whole social arrangement of the nation, was practically built up by the religion which was really its foundation.

Take India, because it is the oldest of the living religions and goes far back into the darkness of a past that none can pierce. You find there that the Hindū polity is the polity of the Indian people. It was the way among the Hindūs that—provided the authority of a sacred scripture, the four Vedās, was admitted, provided the social order was obeyed—the intellect was left absolutely free. Within that great circle of Hindū faith you might have a dozen different cycles of thought, but—provided that all paid their reverence to the Vedā (although afterwards they might go along their own road), provided they kept to the social polity and did not go outside its order—in every religious matter intellect was left utterly and

completely free, and within the great pale of Hindū faith every philosophy was allowed to flourish, every school of thought was recognised as within the faith.

You find when you look to other faiths the same thing to some extent is true. If you come down to the time when Imperial Rome sent her eagles over the then civilised world, you find that those eagles spread their wings over a multiplicity of faiths, and when persecution began against the Christian faith it was less as a new religion that Rome raised her sword against the Christian than against those who would not bow down to the Emperor and pay him divine honours as head of the State; rather as a traitor to the Imperial rule than as a heretic did Rome strike at the Christian. It was the uniqueness claimed for Christianity—it was the refusal to recognise the Emperor among the Gods—that in Rome made persecution rise against the Christian, regarded as a danger to the Imperial rule.

With regard to the other nations of the past the same was true. But now if you look at those religions for a moment, not as belonging to their nations, but rather as what each religion is in itself, what do you see gradually emerging from that mass of opinions, from that vast jungle of faiths? You see certain doctrines emerging which are common to them all. The unveiling of the records of the past by antiquarians and archæologists, the study of ancient faiths and the literature that they have left behind them,

has made in our modern days a consensus of educated opinion that there are doctrines common to all the great religions, coming up time after time in the story of the past and suggesting a common origin for them all. It is not, however, on that that I want to dwell at the moment, but rather on another fact which has not been as widely recognised—that while it is true that every religion contains a small number of universal teachings, every religion also is dominated by a spirit peculiar to itself. As you look over the world's religions this comes out strongly, and it is one of the signs of the plan whereof I spoke.

Every religion has its own note, its own special characteristic, and the whole of them do not sound out a monotone, they sound out a splendid chord, when all are heard together. Take the religion of India, and take its characteristic not from me but from a Christian missionary who lived, I think, some forty years in India, and knew well the religion of the country and the hearts of the people—Dr. Miller, the well known Presbyterian, who founded the Christian College of Madras. After his retirement, writing some three years ago to the college that he founded and built up, to the Hindūs who for so many years had been his pupils, he used one remarkable phrase. “Remember,” he said, “what the Hindū religion has given to the world ; it has given the Immanence of God and the Solidarity of Man.” Those two are really sides of one great

truth. Admit the universal life living in all around us, and the brotherhood of man is only the earthward side of the great spiritual reality; the two must ever go together; and that, Dr. Miller said, is the great note of the Hindū faith.

Pass on to the religion of Zoroaster, and ask what is its special contribution to the thought of the world, and you will find there rings out the note of purity. Good thought, good deed, good word, that is the triple statement that every Pārsī makes every day as part of his daily devotion. Purity of mind, purity of heart, purity of action; that is their special contribution, and purity that goes through every part of life. You must not pollute the earth, the water, the fire; these elements are to be kept pure, otherwise man's physical life inevitably becomes polluted; and one knows how much in our modern life's welter that note is needed now. No Zoroastrian would pollute a stream. If Zoroastrians were living here the streams that go through Manchester would flow as pure and as bright as when this was only a village. That was the great note of the Zoroastrian faith, that man must live a pure life amid pure surroundings.

Coming westward from Persia, what was the note that Egypt sounded in her religious life? It was that of science, study of man and the world around him, and of finding in the higher worlds the realities of which down here we have the shadows. And so thoroughly did Egypt follow science that your very

name of chemistry is taken from the name of that land of Khem, the land of science of the past; so deeply did she mark her name on her favourite subject of investigation.

Passing from Egypt across to Greece, though but a little space divides them physically, how vast is the difference that divides them intellectually! Where Egypt spoke of science, Greece spoke of beauty, and worked the beautiful into the lives of her people as no nation has done before or since. Beauty was a lesson to her whole population. The beauty of Greece was not a beauty in closed galleries only, of pictures and statues veiled by walls. The beauty of Greece spoke in architecture, in statues open to the masses of the people; and she understood, as England does not yet understand, that beauty ought not to be a luxury of the few, but the common bread of life for all mankind.

As Greece spoke of beauty, Rome spoke of law—the greatness of the State, the might of the people as embodied in its government and representatives. Rome thought little of the individual; she thought of the nation; the State was the Roman ideal, and the citizen was law-abiding because, save where law is omnipotent, no true freedom for a nation may exist.

Then when you spring back from Rome and Greece, the parents of modern civilisation, there rises up in India another religion, the great religion of the Lord

Buddha, and the note of that was knowledge; right thought was the keynote of his teaching. Coming westwards again you find the Hebrew, the note of whose religion is righteousness, the doctrine of a righteous Lord who loveth righteousness; and in the bosom of that the later religion of the Christ was born. What is the special note that Christianity gave to the world? First, the value of the individual, which the older nations of the world had not recognised to the same extent. They built their civilisations on the family. The family was the unit, not the individual. Christianity struck the keynote of individualism, and it was in order that that might be fully and thoroughly developed that some of the earlier doctrines for a time were submerged in Christendom.

The great doctrine of Reincarnation (taught in the primitive church, and now reappearing in our own days) dropped for a thousand years out of Christian thinking—wisely and well, as all things are when you see them in the right proportion and the right perspective—for it was necessary to build up the individual, and the idea of but one life, upon which everything depended, gave to the individual an activity that he might not have if he thought that many lives stretched before him and behind him; and the need of exertion built up that idea of individuality necessary for further progress. You look round and you see the evils of individualism; look a little further, and

you will see also the good. You cannot build a house without bricks, and you cannot build an international community until your individuals are developed and have grown strong and mighty.

But there was another note in Christianity not thought of so much at first, but now beginning to make itself clearly heard. For while the idea of one life and of an everlasting heaven and hell stimulated well-nigh to madness the value of the individual soul, there was something else than that doctrine: there was the example of the Founder, and that sounded the note of self-sacrifice, which will in time become the dominant note of Christian nations. For if it be true, as it is true, that Christendom has made the individual more than he ever was before, it is also true that with strength comes the duty of self-sacrifice, and the magical example of the Christ gradually trained the noblest spirits into a desire to emulate the sacrifice they saw.

So in Christendom to-day, imperfect as it is, you find more of altruism than you do in any other nation of the world. I speak what I know, for I have travelled in many lands, and often have I told my Indian friends: Your want of public spirit, your want of patriotism, your apathy in the face of wrong—in those things Christendom is ahead of you, and not behind. While in many points of spiritual living India is greater than England, in the sense of public duty, the duty of the man to oppose evil, to protect

the helpless and to sacrifice himself for the miserable, in that, England is beyond India, and in knowing that strength means duty and not oppression.

When we thus look over these religions of the world so hastily, what is the outcome? That everyone has its own note of music, and each one is different; that though each incarnates one life, one love, the mode of expression differs, and the difference is a gain, not a loss. There is not one of these that you can afford to lose, not one of these dominant keynotes of the many faiths that you can leave out of your coming world-religion. You must take from India her doctrines of the Immanence of God and the Solidarity of Man; from Persia her teaching of Purity; from Egypt Science, which is part of religion, and not against it; from Greece Beauty; from Rome Law; from the Hebrew Righteousness; from Christianity Self-sacrifice. Which of these jewels of the faiths can you do without, when your world-religion emerges?

The truth is that all the differences due to differences of mind, differences of temperament, tell one great truth—that spiritual truth cannot be transmitted by the intellect in its perfection. Only the Spirit in man can realise spiritual truth. The intellect grasps phenomena, and reasons upon them to principles; the Spirit intuits the Spirit, and knows itself at one with all, and all your religions, all the religions of the world are the intellectual presentments of the one great spiritual truth. The intellect is like the prism

which splits up the white sunlight into its constituent parts ; all of them are in the white light, although not visible there till it has passed through the prism, and all the beauty of the world comes from the differences, all the colours of the world are born of the whiteness of the sun.

The difference is not in the sun, it is in the difference of the constitution of the various things on earth that have colour, and that makes the beauty of the world. The blue sea, the green meadow, the colours of the flowers, all the exquisite shades which ravish your eyes with their delight—all take their colours from the one white light, taking some for nourishment, and throwing out the rest for beauty ; and so the world is clad in colours, although the one light is white. So is it with the spiritual sun. There is one Sun of Truth that shines through every religion that has guided and consoled humanity ; but each has taken the part that it needed, and thrown the rest out, like the rainbow which makes the sky beautiful because every drop reflects at a different angle and not all at the same. And so the religions of the world are all wanted, for each reflects the light along a different line of the many-coloured glory of the world-religion, which shall be taken from the diversity of world-faiths, synthesising them all into one.

That is the first point I want to leave clear and distinct. Unity and uniformity are not the same. The life is one, but the splendour of the world depends

upon the diversity of forms. Why, what is evolution? The protoplasm becoming plant and tree, animal and man; and the greater the difference the greater the amount of the divine light that shines through all. That life is so full, so rich, that it cannot body itself out in a single form, and only the totality of the universe can mirror the divine image. In multiplicity, then, not in uniformity, lies the richness and the beauty of religion, as of all else there is in the world; and the world-religion will not, I believe, wipe out the differences between faiths, but blend them all into one.

There is not very much power, perhaps, in the scale of notes that you play on a piano one after another as you run up the keys, but if the notes are well chosen and blended together with the magic of a Beethoven or a Wagner, then the musical chord swells out the grander, the more moving, the more the notes that the magic of the master has blended into a single chord. When the world-religion emerges it will not be this religion or that, one religion or another; it will be one great chord of harmony, swelling up from humanity together, in which every note is perfect, but on their union into a chord depends the splendour and the force of the whole.

Let us next consider what are the conditions that would make the emergence of the world faith possible. Clearly it was not possible two hundred years ago. All the different religions were shut in, each within

its own little ring-fence, knowing nothing of the other religions of the world. How much did Christendom know of the great Eastern faiths two hundred years ago? Many things have contributed to make the change. First of all, the progress of science in making means of communication easier and swifter. When it took you months to travel half-way round the world a man went and settled in a new country, made his home there, lived and died there. But when communication is easy, when you can run across to India, from London to Bombay, in less than fourteen days, as I did only a few weeks ago; when you see the means of communication becoming swifter and swifter, it is inevitable that the men of different faiths should come into contact with each other, and learn each other's thoughts and ways.

When I was a little child they used to issue missionary maps in which the different lands of the world were painted according to the colour of their faith. A bright yellow, symbolical of light, was painted over the countries that were Christian, and black, symbolical of darkness, over the whole of the rest of the world. They called the blackness heathendom and the bright spots Christendom, and it was a little depressing to the childish mind to see how much larger heathendom was than Christendom. Then they thought their faith unique—the one revelation. But now men are wiser than that. Not so long ago an Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in Exeter

Hall to a number of assembled missionaries who were going out to India, told them to remember that they were going to a country that had its own scriptures, its own philosophy, its own faith, and that they must not forget that all scriptures were God-inspired—although he naturally thought his own the most inspired of all.

When an archbishop can speak like that, when in the very act of sending out missionaries he bids them remember, as S. Paul said many years ago, that God in many ways and divers manners spake in time past by the prophets; when people begin to recognise that prophets are of no one nation, but of all; when people begin to understand that scriptures belong to every religion, and not to one alone; when they realise that in the divine kingdom there are no aliens and no outcasts, but that in that great household all are in their father's house; when that begins to dawn on men—and it is dawning on the flower of humanity to-day in every nation—then the conditions become possible for a world-faith as they have never been possible before; and one understands that perchance the feeling may spread which is voiced in one of the ancient scriptures of the Indian people, where in the person of Shri Kṛṣṇa the supreme God is speaking, and He declares: "Mankind comes to me along many roads, and on every road that a man approaches me, on that road do I welcome him; for all roads are mine."

That is a great truth. God is the centre, the religions are all on the circumference, and as all the radii lead to the centre so all religions lead to God at last. What is needed is not that we should convert each other, but that each of us should deepen and spiritualise his own religion, and find out its value for himself. As that spirit spreads, as men more and more realise that all have something to learn and all have something to teach, as that idea spreads over the civilised world, surely the emergence of a world-religion becomes possible.

But more than that is in our favour to-day. I alluded just now to antiquarian and archæological research, to the labours of scholars, to the study, oriental and occidental, everywhere proceeding. Out of all that research and all that scholarly investigation the truth has emerged that I mentioned—that there are certain great doctrines believed everywhere, at all times, by all peoples, which we find in all the religions of the world. That is the true Catholicism. The doctrines believed always, the doctrines believed everywhere, the doctrines believed by all. And why the true Catholicism? Because it is the testimony of the religious consciousness to the communion of man with God.

In the last century, as you know, at the time when science seemed to be building up an impregnable materialism, Professor Huxley and many of those who thought with him took the name Agnostic to describe

their intellectual position. The name was quite significant. Translated, of course it sounds absurd—without knowledge—seeing that it was taken by scientific men, men who certainly were not ignorant. But everyone knows what it meant: ‘Agnostic,’ ‘without the Gnosis’, and the Gnosis was not knowledge in general, but knowledge of a particular kind. Professor Huxley said that man had two means of knowledge—the senses whereby he observed external phenomena, and the reason by which he considered those phenomena and drew conclusions from them. Those, he said, were man’s two means of knowledge, and the only ones that he could see man possessed—senses to observe, reason to understand. But the Gnosis—that is not known by the senses, it is not reached by the intellect; it is the knowledge of the Spirit by the Spirit, and that was said to be unknown.

Now look, any one of you, at yourself, or at human history as a whole. Clearly you have a body and senses, emotions and a mind; have you nothing more? On the answer to that the future of religion must depend. For every scripture is at one in this idea, that neither can the senses see nor the reason understand the Spirit which is life universal and eternal. Do you not find anything within you beyond senses and intellect? Has there been no moment in your life when you felt that there was something more than that? History shows us that what is called the religious instinct is the most widely spread and the

most persistent of all the testimonies of human consciousness.

That is one point that you must consider when you are thinking of the agnostic position. All that you know depends on the testimony of consciousness. That is the deepest, the surest, within you. Your senses may deceive you ; they tell you the sun rises and sets, when it does nothing of the kind. Your reason also sometimes misleads you, for it has not data enough on which to work, and the conclusions of the reason must depend on the perfection of the data on which the conclusions are founded. But from great intellects and small, from nations of every type and kind, the testimony of the religious consciousness has arisen and arises still to-day. Are you going to trust consciousness in everything else and refuse its evidence here ? Can you ignore that universal testimony from the oldest ages down to the present ? It is from that—that testimony universal, immemorial—that religion springs.

Religion is the search of man for God ; that is its real meaning. And what is interesting is this, that when you go beyond the senses and the reason you go beyond difference ; for the testimony of all the mystics to religious experience is the same. The Indian Yogī, the Roman Catholic saint, the Protestant devotee, all have the same experiences and speak with the same tongue. They differ in ceremonies, beliefs, outward things, but in the region of the Spirit they

speak one language, and not the babel of the crowds that you hear down below. If you are inclined to throw that aside you have another difficulty which arises before you: that the men whom humanity most reverences, the men to whom humanity most looks up, are the men whose religious consciousness has spoken the most clearly and the most decisively.

Conquerors come and go, Kings rule and perish, statesmen appear and disappear, but the geniuses of religion endure from generation to generation, from age to age, holding the homage and the veneration of humanity. What conqueror of ancient or of modern times, what mighty King, what genius of a statesman, dare you put beside the Buddha and the Christ as types of the supreme humanity? Their crown is immortal, it does not fade; their empire is continual, it does not pass away. Millions upon millions in every generation do homage to the greatness of those two. I do not raise as to them any religious question; I do not ask whether they were more than man; but I say that among all the men that humanity has produced, whose names are remembered, there is none that approaches those mighty two in the reverence and the love of countless myriads of men. There, again, is a testimony to greatness of the religious kind.

Now for the first time it has become possible for us, looking over the world, to see that all the great teachers were animated by a single spirit, and the great truths, as I said, were one and the same. But

then comes another question: If this be so, how will you get rid of all the differences about which they raise controversy? By trying to raise men from the intellectual ground to the spiritual consciousness where all men are at one. That is the answer. The world-religion cannot be dogmatic; it must be what is sometimes called mystic. What do the two words mean? I am not one of those who, in the study of religious history, are inclined to throw contempt and scorn on dogma. I believe it is necessary at a stage of religious evolution as at a stage of education. A dogma is only the statement of a truth, or what is believed to be a truth, imposed upon a person from outside. He is taught it by authority; it may be the authority of a book, a man, or a Church—it does not matter; it comes to the man from outside and demands belief.

That is true in science when you are learning it. When you go to the laboratory, to the school, to learn science, you are bound to learn by dogmatic statements. The expert in science says such and such is the truth, and if your boy won't accept it for the time, he will never make much progress in his scientific research. If he wants to be an entire free-thinker in the laboratory, he is likely rather to go to pieces. If he says: "I cannot take anything on authority. I am not willing to take it on the testimony of someone else that if I combine nitrogen and chlorine there will be an explosion." Well, if he

tries he will find it out for himself, but he will have to record his experiment in other worlds than this. You must have dogmas, you cannot help it for a time; but that which the student learns through dogma he finds out later by his own experiment, and then only does it become knowledge. That which you are told is not knowledge; you may repeat it, but you don't know it; and the very object of all education is to train the student from the dogmatic stage to the stage where he knows by his own reason and his own intelligence.

So also with religion. In the childhood of the soul, in the boyhood of the soul, dogma is necessary for its training, and the objection to it that is heard on every side is largely the objection of ignorance, not realising what it means, nor its place in the long evolution of human consciousness.

But there is a stage where dogma must give way to knowledge. The belief of the mystic, the knowledge of the mystic is not the acceptance of a truth imposed upon him by authority from without, but the recognition of a truth that arises within him, and compels his obedience. That is what the mystic is; the man who sees truth. Your need is knowledge; but what is the condition of knowledge? That you can modify part of yourself to answer to that which comes to you from outside. You see only because you have ether in your own body, and the ether on the retina of the eye can be thrown into

vibration by the waves of light, waves of ether, and you see because you can reproduce. The same is true of all your senses.

You only know of the outer world that to which you can answer from within yourself. Your hearing, your smelling, your tasting, your seeing, your feeling, are all through modifications of your body, which has learnt in that part to modify itself, to answer to the vibrations that come to you from outside. There are millions of vibrations that beat up against you, and you know them not, because you cannot reproduce them. To carry on the analogy—for all the world is really one—the man who has developed within himself the spiritual nature can answer to the spiritual vibrations of the universe, because he can reproduce them within himself.

That is the condition of knowledge—when the God within you answers to the God without you, then and then only have you reached the Gnosis, and then only can you *know* that God exists. You cannot demonstrate Him by the reason; you can only make a probability. You cannot see Him by the senses. “Not in the eye resides his form,” an Indian scripture declares; but the Spirit in you which is part of Himself, a spark from the eternal fire, a seed from the eternal tree, that knows the source whence it comes; and when the Spirit opens up, then only God is known. If you seek Him within rather than without, if you sound the depths of your own nature

instead of looking only at the outside nature where least of Him is seen—then, when once you have found Him within, you will see Him everywhere outside, and then none can shake your belief, for it is knowledge and no longer hearsay.

There is the testimony of the mystic, there is the place of the world-religion. It will impose no dogmas from without; it will evoke answer from within. It will seek to develop the spiritual nature, and know that truth is believed the moment it is seen. The great blunder of religious people has been that they have used swords to recommend their truth. Truth wants nothing but its own appearance before the Spirit of man. If you are shut up in a dark room into which the sunlight does not penetrate, although it is bathing the house outside, should I say to you: "You shall be cursed because you deny the sun"? Or should I say: "My brother, come outside the house and see where the sun is shining"? That is the nature of truth; you only want to know it, and you must believe it, and you must know it for yourself. When the world-religion has emerged, then every man shall find in himself the power to know, and therefore the spiritual consciousness.

Never try, then, to impose from without a belief from which another man shrinks. The moment he has risen to the place where it is visible, that moment it will shine out before his eyes. We cannot do much in this for others; we can tell them

what we have experienced, what we know ; but man must know for himself, for only then is the knowledge sure. When you have reached that you will know that every stage has its own place, its own beauty. You will not complain because the child-souls still find picture and symbol the way in which they best can realise the divine. You will understand that every teaching has its place, every religion has its work, but that a religion to be world-wide must be greater than man, otherwise some will escape it, and it must be all-inclusive.

My last word to you, friends, is, that if you desire the coming of such a world-religion, which shall lay the basis of a civilisation of brotherhood and bring about universal peace, then you must begin within yourselves rather than without. As we deepen our own spiritual nature, as we find out one truth after another for ourselves, as we realise what we are—Gods in the making, growing into the perfection of the divine image—as we recognise that, we are laying the bases of the world-religion ; and that which can never come by argument, by controversy, by intellectual reasoning, will come when the heart of love within us has awakened the spiritual nature. For love is deeper than intellect, love is greater than intelligence, and the love nature and the divine nature are so closely blended that it will not be long ere the man who loves his brother loves God.

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ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 6

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## Castes in India

*Reprinted from "The Theosophist" of May 1880*

BY

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR

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## Castes in India

No man of sincerity and moral courage can read Mr. G. C. Whitworth's *Profession of Faith*,<sup>1</sup> as reviewed in the April (1880) *Theosophist*, without feeling himself challenged to be worthy of the respect of one who professes such honourable sentiments. I, too, am called upon to make my statement of personal belief. It is due to my family and caste-fellows that they should know why I have deliberately abandoned my caste and other worldly considerations. If, henceforth, there is to be a chasm between them and myself, I owe it to myself to declare that this alienation is of my own choosing, and I am not cut off for bad conduct. I would be glad to take with me, if possible, into my new career, the affectionate good wishes of my kinsmen. But, if this cannot be done, I must bear their displeasure, as I may, for I am obeying a paramount conviction of duty.

I was born in the family of the Karhāda Mahārāshtra caste of Brāhmaṇas, as my surname will indicate. My father carefully educated me in the tenets of our

<sup>1</sup> *A Personal Statement of Religious Belief* is the actual title of the brochure.—ED.

religion, and, in addition, gave me every facility for acquiring an English education. From the age of ten until I was about fourteen, I was very much exercised in mind upon the subject of religion and devoted myself with great ardour to our orthodox religious practices. Then my ritualistic observances were crowded aside by my scholastic studies, but, until about nine months ago, my religious thoughts and aspirations were entirely unchanged. At this time, I had the inestimable good fortune to read *Isis Unveiled; A Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Religion and Science*, and to join the Theosophical Society. It is no exaggeration to say that I have been a really living man only these few months; for between life as it appears to me now and life as I comprehended it before, there is an unfathomable abyss. I feel that now for the first time I have a glimpse of what man and life are—the nature and powers of the one, the possibilities, duties, and joys of the other. Before, though ardently ritualistic, I was not really enjoying happiness and peace of mind. I simply practised my religion without understanding it. The world bore just as hard upon me as upon others, and I could get no clear view of the future. The only real thing to me seemed the day's routine; at best the horizon before me extended only to the rounding of a busy life with the burning of my body and the obsequial ceremonies rendered to me by friends. My aspirations were only for

more Zamindāries, social position and the gratification of whims and appetites. But my later reading and thinking have shown me that all these are but the vapours of a dream and that he only is worthy of being called man, who has made caprice his slave and the perfection of his spiritual Self the grand object of his efforts. As I could not enjoy these convictions and my freedom of action within my caste, I am stepping outside it.

In making this profession, let it be understood that I have taken this step, not because I am a Theosophist, but because in studying Theosophy I have learnt and heard of the ancient splendour and glory of my country—the highly esteemed land of Āryāvarta. Joining the Theosophical Society does not interfere with the social, political, or religious relations of any person. All have an equal right in the Society to hold their opinions. So far from persuading me to do what I have, Mme. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott have strongly urged me to wait until some future time, when I might have had ampler time to reflect. But the glimpse I have got into the former greatness of my country makes me feel sadly for her degeneration. I feel it, therefore, my bounden duty to devote all my humble powers to her restoration. Besides, histories of various nations furnish to us many examples of young persons having given up everything for the sake of their country and having ultimately succeeded in gaining their aims. Without patriots no country

can rise. This feeling of patriotism by degrees grew so strong in me that it has now prepared my mind to stamp every personal consideration under my feet for the sake of my Motherland. In this, I am neither a revolutionist nor a politician, but simply an advocate of good morals and principles as practised in ancient times. The study of Theosophy has thrown a light over me in regard to my country, my religion, my duty. I have become a better Āryan than I ever was. I have similarly heard my Pārsī brothers say that they have been better Zoroastrians since they joined the Theosophical Society. I have also seen the Buddhists write often to the Society that the study of Theosophy has enabled them to appreciate their religion the more. And thus this study makes every man respect his religion the more. It furnishes to him a sight that can pierce through the dead letter and see clearly the spirit. He can read all his religious books between the lines. If we view all the religions in their popular sense, they appear strongly antagonistic to each other in various details. None agrees with the other. And yet the representatives of those Faiths say that the study of Theosophy explains to them all that has been said in their religion and makes them feel a greater respect for it. There must, therefore, be one common ground on which all the religious systems are built. And this ground, which lies at the bottom of all, is Truth. There can be but one absolute truth, but different persons have different perceptions

of that truth. And this truth is morality. If we separate the dogmas that cling to the principles set forth in any religion, we shall find that morality is preached in every one of them. By religion I do not mean all the minor sects that prevail to an innumerable extent all over the world, but the principal ones from which have sprung up these different sects. It is, therefore, proper for every person to abide by the principles of morality. And, according to them, I consider it every man's duty to do what he can to make the world better and happier. This can proceed from a love for humanity. But how can a man love the whole of humanity if he has no love for his countrymen ? Can he love the whole, who does not love a part ? If I, therefore, wish to place my humble services at the disposal of the world, I must first begin by working for my country. And this I could not do by remaining in my caste. I found that, instead of a love for his countrymen, the observance of caste distinction leads one to hate even his neighbour, because he happens to be of another caste. I could not bear this injustice. What fault is it of anyone that he is born in a particular caste ? I respect a man for his qualities, and not for his birth. That is to say, that man is superior in my eyes, whose *inner* man has been developed or is in the state of development. This body, wealth, friends, relations, and all other worldly enjoyments that men hold near and dear to their hearts, are to pass away sooner or later. But

the record of our actions is ever to remain to be handed down from generation to generation. Our actions must, therefore, be such as will make us worthy of our existence in this world, as long as we are here as well as after death. I could not do this by observing the customs of caste. It made me selfish and unmindful of the requirements of my fellow brothers. I weighed all these circumstances in my mind, and found that I believed in caste as a religious necessity no more than in the palm tree yielding mangoes. I saw that, if it were not for this distinction, India would not have been so degraded, for this distinction engendered hatred among her sons. It made them hate and quarrel with one another. The peace of the land was disturbed. People could not unite with one another for good purposes. They waged war with one another, instead of devoting all their combined energies to the cause of ameliorating the condition of the country. The foundation of immorality was thus laid, until it has reached now so low a point that, unless this mischief is stopped, the tottering pillars of India will soon give way. I do not by this mean to blame my ancestors who originally instituted this system. To me their object seems to be quite a different one. It was based in my opinion on the qualities of every person. The caste was not then hereditary as it is now. This will be seen from the various ancient books, which are full of instances in which Kṣhāṭṭrias and

even Māhars and Chambārs, who are considered the lowest of all, wēre not only made and regarded as Brāhmaṇas, but almost worshipped as demi-gods simply for their qualities. If such is the case, why should we still stick to that custom which we now find not only impracticable but injurious ? I again saw that, if I were to observe outwardly what I did not really believe inwardly, I was practising hypocrisy. I found that I was thus making myself a slave, by not enjoying freedom of conscience ; I was thus acting immorally. But Theosophy had taught me that to enjoy peace of mind and self-respect, I must be honest, candid, peaceful, and regard all men as equally my brothers, irrespective of caste, colour, race or creed. This I see is an essential part of religion. I must try to put these theoretical problems into practice. These are the convictions that finally hurried me out of my caste.

I would at the same time ask my fellow-countrymen, who are of my opinion, to come out boldly for their country. I understand the apparent sacrifices one is required to make in adopting such a course, for I myself had to make them ; but these are sacrifices only in the eyes of one who has regard for this world of matter. . When a man has once extricated himself from this regard and when the sense of duty he owes to his country and to himself reigns paramount in his heart, these are no sacrifices at all for him. Let us, therefore, leave off this distinction which separates us from one another, join in one common accord, and combine all our energies for the good of our country.

Let us feel that we are Āryans, and prove ourselves worthy of our ancestors. I may be told that I am making a foolish and useless sacrifice; that I cut myself off from all social intercourse and even risk losing the decent disposal of my body by those upon whom our customs impose that duty; and that none but a visionary would imagine that he, even though chiefest among Brāhmaṇas, could restore his country's greatness and the enlightenment of a whole nation, so great as ours. But these are the arguments of selfishness and moral cowardice. Single men have saved nations before, and though my vanity does not make me even dream that so glorious a result is within my humble grasp, yet a good example is never valueless, and it can be set even by the most insignificant. Certain it is that, without examples and self-sacrifices, there can be no reform. The world, as I see it, imposes on me a duty, and I think the most powerful and the only permanent cause of happiness is the consciousness that I am trying to do that duty.

I wish it understood—in case what has preceded has not made this perfectly clear—that I have neither become a Materialist nor a Christian. I am an Āryan in religion as in all else, follow the Veda and believe it to be the parent of all religions among men. As Theosophy explains the secondary human religions, so does it make plain the meaning of the Veda. The teachings of the R̥shis acquire a new splendour and majesty, and I revere them a hundred times more than ever before.

ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 7

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The Meaning and Method of  
Spiritual Life

BY

ANNIE BESANT

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# The Meaning and Method of Spiritual Life

IN considering the meaning and the method of the spiritual life, it is well to begin by defining the meaning of the term "spiritual," for on that there exists a good deal of uncertainty among religious people. We constantly hear people speaking of "spirit" and "soul" as though they were interchangeable terms. Man has a "body and soul," or a "body and spirit," they say, as though the two words "spirit" and "soul" had no definite and distinct meaning; and naturally if the words "spirit" and "soul" are not clearly understood, the term "spiritual life" must necessarily remain confused. But the Theosophist, in dealing with man, divides him in a definite and scientific way both as regards his consciousness and as regards the vehicles through which that consciousness manifests, and he restricts the use of the word "spirit" to that Divine in man that manifests on the highest planes of the universe, and that is distinguished by its consciousness of unity. Unity is the key-note of spirit, for below the

spiritual realm all is division. When we pass from the spiritual into the intellectual, we at once find ourselves in the midst of separation.

Dealing with our own intellectual nature, to which the word "soul" ought to be restricted, we at once notice that it is, as is often said, the very principle of separateness. In the growth of our intellectual nature we become more and more conscious of the separateness of the "I". It is this which is sometimes called the "I-ness" in man. It is this which gives rise to all our ideas as to separate existence, separate property, separate gains and losses; it is just as much a part of the man as spirit, only a different part, and it is the very antithesis of the spiritual nature. For where the intellect sees "I" and "mine" the spirit sees unity, non-separateness; where the intellect strives to develop itself and assert itself as separate, the spirit sees itself in all things and regards all forms as equally its own.

It is on the spiritual nature that turn all the great mysteries of the religions of the world, for it is a mystery to the ordinary man, this depth of unity in the very centre of his being, which regards all around it as part of itself, and thinks of nothing as separately its own. That which is called in the Christian religion the "Atonement" belongs entirely to the spiritual nature, and can never be intelligible so long as the man thinks of himself as a separate intellect, an intelligence apart from others. For the very essence of the Atonement lies in the fact that the spiritual nature, being everywhere one, can pour itself out into one

form or another ; it is because this fact of the spiritual nature has not been understood, and only the separation of the intellect has been seen, that men, in dealing with that great spiritual doctrine, changed it into a legal substitution of one individual for other individuals, instead of recognising that the Atonement is wrought by the all-pervading spirit, which, by identity of nature, can pour itself into any form at will.

Hence we are to think of the spirit as that part of man's nature in which the sense of unity resides, the part in which primarily he is one with God, and secondarily one with all that lives throughout the universe. A very old Upanishat begins with the statement that all this world is God-inveiled, and going on then to speak of the man who knows that vast, pervading, all-embracing unity, it bursts into a cry of exultation : " What then becomes of sorrow, what then becomes of delusion, for him who has known the unity ? " That sense of a oneness at the heart of things is the testimony of the spiritual consciousness, and only as that is realised is it possible that the spiritual life shall manifest. The technical names—by which we, as Theosophists, mark out the spirit—matter not at all. They are drawn from the Samskr̥t, which for millennia has been in the habit of having definite names for every stage of human and other consciousness ; but this one mark of unity is the one on which we may rest as the sign of the spiritual nature. And so again it is written in an old Eastern book, that " the man who sees the One Self in everything, and all things in the

Self, he seeth, verily, he seeth". And all else is blindness. The sense of separation, while necessary for evolution, is fundamentally a mistake. The separateness is only like the branch that grows out of a trunk, and the unity of the life of the tree passes into every branch and makes them all a one-ness; and it is the consciousness of that one-ness which is the consciousness of the spirit.

Now in Christendom the sense of one-ness has been personified in the Christ, the first stage—where there is still the Christ and the Father—is where the wills are blended, "not my will but thine be done"; the second stage is where the sense of unity is felt: "I and my Father are one." In that manifestation of the spiritual life we have the ideal which underlies the deepest inspiration of the Christian sacred writings, and it is only as "the Christ is born in man," to use the Christian symbol, that the truly spiritual life begins. This is very strongly pointed out in some of the Epistles. St. Paul, writing to Christians and not to the profane or heathen—to those who have been baptised, who are recognised members of the Church, in a day when membership was more difficult to gain than it is in these later times—says to them: "Ye are not spiritual: ye are carnal." And the reason he gives for regarding them as carnal and not spiritual is: "I hear that there be divisions among you"; for where the spiritual life is dominant, harmony, and not division, is to be found. And the second great stage of the spiritual life is also marked out in the Christian scriptures, as in all the other great

world-scriptures, when it is said that, when the end cometh, all that has been gathered up in the Christ, the Son, is gathered up yet further into the Father, and "God shall be all in all". Even that partial separation of Son and Father vanishes, and the unity is supreme. So that whether we read the *Upaniṣhads*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, or the Christian *New Testament*, we find ourselves in exactly the same atmosphere as regards the meaning, the nature of the spiritual life: it is that which knows the one-ness, that in which unity is complete.

Now this is possible for men, despite all the separation of the intellect and of the various bodies which bar us out the one from the other, because in the heart of our nature we are Divine. That is the great reality on which all the beauty and power of human life depend. And it is no small thing whether, in the ordinary thought of a people, they rest upon the idea that they are divine, or have been deluded into the idea that they are by nature sinful, miserable and degraded. Nothing is so fatal to progress, nothing so discouraging to the growth of the inner nature, as the continual repetition of that which is not true: that man fundamentally and essentially is wicked, instead of being Divine. It is a poison at the very heart of his life; it stamps him with a brand which it is hard indeed for him to throw off; and if we want to win even the lowest and most degraded to a sense of inner dignity, which will enable them to climb out of the mud in which they are plunged, up to the dignity of a Divine human nature, we must never

hesitate to preach to them their essential Divinity, and that in the heart of them they are righteous and not foul. For it is just in proportion as we do that, that there will be within them the faint stirrings of the spirit, so overlaid that they are not conscious of it in their ordinary life ; and if there is one duty of the preacher of religion more vital than another, it is that all who hear him shall feel within themselves the stirring of the Divine.

Looking thus at every man as Divine at heart, we begin to ask : If that be the meaning of spirit and spiritual life, what is the method for its unfolding ? The first step is that which has just been mentioned, to get people to believe in it, to throw aside all that has been said about the heart of man being " desperately wicked " ; to throw aside all that is said about original sin. There is no original sin save ignorance and into that we are all born, and we have slowly to grow out of it by experience, which gives us wisdom. That is the starting point, as the conscious sense of unity is the Crown. And the method of the spiritual life is that which enables the life to show itself forth in reality as it ever is in essence. The inner Divinity of man, that is the inspiring thought which we want to spread through all the Churches of the West, which too long have been clouded by a doctrine exactly the reverse. When man once believes himself Divine, he will seek to justify his inner nature.

Now the method of the spiritual life in the fullest sense cannot, I frankly admit, be applied to the least developed amongst us ; for them the very first lesson

is that ancient lesson: "Cease to do evil." In one of my favourite *Upanishads*, when it speaks of the steps whereby a man may search after and find the Self, the God within him, the first step, it is said, is to "cease to do evil". That is the first step towards the spiritual life, the foundation which a man must lay. The second step is active: to do the right. These are two commonplaces which we hear on every side, but they are no less true because commonplace, and they are necessary everywhere and must be repeated until the evil is forsaken and the good embraced. Without the accomplishment of these, the spiritual life cannot be begun. And then, as to the later steps, it is written that no man who is slothful, no man who is unintelligent, no man who is lacking in devotion, can find the Self. And again it is said that: "The Self is not found by knowledge nor by devotion, but by knowledge wedded to devotion." These are the two wings that lift the man up into the spiritual world.

To fill up these broad outlines which are set to guide us to the narrow ancient Path, we may find a mass of details in the various scriptures of the world, but what is specially needed just now, is the way in which people living in the world, bound by domestic ties, and ties of occupation of every sort, how these people may have a method by which the spiritual life may be gained, by which progress in real spirituality may be secured. It is true that in all the different religions of the world there has been a certain inclination to draw a line of division between the life of the world and

the life of the spirit ; that line of division, which is real, is, however, very often misunderstood and misrepresented, and is thought to consist in circumstance, whereas it consists in attitude—a profound difference, and one of the most vital import to us. Owing to the mistake that it is a difference of circumstances which makes the life of the world and the life of the spirit, men and women in all ages have left the world in order to find the Divine. They have gone out into desert and jungle and cave, into mountain and solitary plain, imagining that by giving up what they called “the world,” the life of the spirit might be secured. And yet if God be all-pervading and everywhere, He must be in the market-place as much as in the desert, in the house of commerce as much as in the jungle, in the law-court as much as in the solitary mountain, in the haunts of men as well as in the lonely places. And although it be true that the weaker souls can more easily sense the all-pervading life where the jangle of humanity is not around them, that is a sign of weakness and not a sign of spirituality. It is not the strong, the heroic, the warrior, who asks for solitude in his seeking for the spiritual life.

Yet in the many lives that men lead in their slow climbing to perfection, the life of the solitary has its place, and often a man or woman for a life will go aside into some lonely place and dwell there solitary. But that is never the last and crowning life, it is never the life in which the Christ walks the earth. Such a life is sometimes led for preparation, for the

breaking off of ties which the man is not strong enough otherwise to break. He runs away because he cannot battle, he evades because he cannot face. And in the days of the weakness of the man, of his childhood, that is often a wise policy ; and for any one over whom temptations have still strong power it is good advice to avoid them. But the true hero of the spiritual life avoids no place and shuns no person ; he is not afraid of polluting his garments, for he has woven them of stuff that cannot be soiled. In the earlier days sometimes flight is wise, but it should be recognised as what it is—weakness, and not strength. And those who live the solitary life are men who will return again to lead the life of the world, and having learned detachment in the solitary places will keep that power of detachment when they return to the ordinary life of men. Liberation, the freeing of the spirit, that conscious life of union with God which is the mark of the man become Divine, that last conquest is won in the world, it is not won in the jungle and the desert.

In this world the spiritual life is gradually to be won, and by means of this world the lessons of the spirit are to be learned—but on one condition. This condition embraces two stages : first, the man does all that ought to be done because it is duty. He recognises, as the spiritual life is dawning in him, that all his actions are to be performed, not because he wants them to bring him some particular result, but because it is his duty to perform them—easily said, but how hard to accomplish ! The man need

change nothing in his life to become a spiritual man, but he must change his attitude to life; he must cease to ask anything from it; he must give to it everything he does, because it is his duty. Now that conception of life is the first great step towards the recognition of the unity. If there be only one great life, if each of us is only an expression of that life, then all our activity is simply the working of that Life within us, and the results of that working are reaped by the common Life and not by the separated self. This is what is meant by the ancient phrase: "give up working for fruit"—the fruit is the ordinary result of action.

This advice is only for those who will to lead the spiritual life, for it is not well for people to give up working for the fruit of action until the more potent motive has arisen within them, that spurs them into activity without the prize coming to the personal self. Activity we must have at all hazards; it is the way of evolution. Without activity the man does not evolve; without effort and struggle he floats in one of the backwaters of life, and makes no progress along the river. Activity is the law of progress; as a man exercises himself, new life flows into him, and for that reason it is written that the slothful man may never find the Self. The slothful, the inactive man has not even begun to turn his face to the spiritual life. The motive for action for the ordinary man is quite properly the enjoyment of the fruit. This is God's way of leading the world along the path of evolution. He puts prizes before men. They strive

after the prizes, and as they strive they develop their powers. And when they seize the prize, it crumbles to pieces in their hands—always. If we look at human life, we see how continually this is repeated. A man desires money; he gains it, millions are his; and in the midst of his millions a deadly discontent invades him, and a weariness of the wealth that he is not able to use. A man strives for fame and wins it; and then he calls it: “A voice going by, to be lost on an endless sea.” He strives for power, and when he has striven for it all his life and holds it, power palls upon him, and the wearied statesman throws down office, weary and disappointed. The same sequence is ever repeated. These are the toys by holding out which the Father of all induces His children to exert themselves, and He Himself hides within the toy in order to win them; for there is no beauty and no attraction anywhere save the life of God. But when the toy is grasped the life leaves it, and it crumbles to pieces in the hand, and the man is disappointed. For the value lay in the struggle, and not in the possession, in the putting forth of powers to obtain, and not in the idleness that waits on victory. And so man evolves, and until these delights have lost their power to attract, it is well that they shall continue to nerve men to effort and struggle. But when the spirit begins to stir and to seek its own manifestation, then the prizes lose their attractive power, and the man sees duty as motive instead of fruit. And then he works for duty’s sake, as part of the One Great Life,

and he works with all the energy of the man who works for fruit, perhaps even with more. The man who can work unwearying at some great scheme for human good and then, after years of labour, see the whole of it crumbling to pieces before him, and remain content, that man has gone far along the road of the spiritual life. Does it seem impossible? No. Not when we understand the Life, and have felt the Unity; for in that consciousness no effort for human good is wasted, no work for human good fails of its perfect end. The form matters nothing; a form in which the work is embodied may crumble, but the life remains.

And in order to make it very clear that such a motive may animate men even outside the spiritual life, we may consider how sometimes in some great campaign of battle it is realised that success and failure are words that change their meaning, when a vast host struggles for a single end. Sometimes a small band of soldiers will be sent to achieve a hopeless, an impossible task. Sometimes to a commanding officer may come an order which he knows it impossible to obey. "Carry such-and-such a place"—perhaps a hill-side, bristling with cannon, and he knows that before he can gain the top of that hill his regiment will be decimated, and, if he presses on, annihilated. Does it make any difference to the loyal soldier who trusts his general and leads his men? No. The man does not hesitate when the impossible task is put before him; he regards it only as a proof of the confidence of his commander, that he knows him strong enough to fight and inevitably fail.

And after the last man dies, and only the corpses remain, have they failed? It looks so to those who have only seen that little part of the struggle; but while they held the attention of the enemy, other movements had been made unnoticed which rendered victory secure, and when a grateful nation raises the monument of thanks to those who have conquered, the names of those who have failed in order to make the victory of their comrades possible will hold a place of honour in the roll of glory, and of the nation's gratitude. And so with the spiritual man. He knows the plan cannot fail. He knows that the combat must in the end be crowned with victory, and what matters it to him, who has known the One-ness, that his little part is stamped by the world as failure, when it has made possible the victory of the great plan for human redemption, which is the real end for which he worked? He was not working to make success here, to found some great institution there, he was working for the redemption of humanity. And his part of the work may have its form shattered; it matters not, the life advances and succeeds.

That is what is meant by working for duty. It makes all life comparatively easy. It makes it calm, strong, impartial, and undaunted; for the man does not cling to anything he does. When he has done it, he has no more concern with it. Let it go for success or failure as the world counts them, for he knows the Life within is ever going onwards to its goal. And it is the secret of peace in work, because those who work for

success are always troubled, always anxious, always counting their forces, reckoning their chances and possibilities; but the man who cares nothing for success but only for duty, he works with the strength of divinity, and his aim is always sure.

That is the first great step, and in order to be able to take it there is one secret that we must remember : we must do everything as though the Great Power were doing it through us. That is the secret of what is called "inaction in the midst of action". If a man of the world would become truly spiritual, that is the thought that he must put behind all his work. The counsel, the judge, the solicitor, what must be the motive in each man's heart if in these ordinary affairs of life he would learn the secret of the spirit? He must regard himself simply as an incarnation of Divine Justice. "What," a man says, "in the midst of law as we know it?" Yes, even there, imperfect as it is, full of wrongs as it may be, it is the Justice of God striving to make itself supreme on earth; and the man who would be a spiritual man in the profession of the law must think of himself as an incarnation of the Divine Justice, and always have at the heart of his thought: "I am the Divine hand of Justice in the world and as that I follow law." And so in all else. Take Commerce. Commerce is one of the ways by which the world lives—a part of the Divine activity. The man in Commerce must think of himself as part of that circulating stream of life by which nations are drawn together. He is the Divine Merchant in the world, and in him Divine activity

must find hands and feet. And all who take part in the ruling and guidance of the nations, they also are representatives of the Divine Lawgiver, and only do their work aright as they realise that they incarnate His life in that aspect towards His world. I know how strange this sounds when we think of the strife of parties, and of the pettinesses of politicians; but the degradation of man does not touch the reality of the Divine Presence, and in every ruler, or fragment of a ruler, the Divine Lawgiver is seeking to incarnate Himself in order that the nation may have a national life, noble, happy and pure. And if only a few men in every walk of life strove thus to lead the spiritual life; if, casting aside all fruits of individual action, they thought of themselves as only incarnations of the many aspects of the Divine activity in the world, how then would the life of the world be made beautiful and sublime!

And so in the life of the home. The head of the household, the husband, incarnates God in His relation of supporter and helper of the life of His universe. So much has this been seen in older days that the Logos of the universe, God manifest, is said in one old Hindū book to be the Great Householder. And so should every husband think of himself as incarnating the Divine Householder, whose wife and children exist not for his comfort or delight, but in order that he may show out the Divine as perfect man, as husband and father. And so also the wife and mother should think of herself as the incarnation of the other side of Nature, the side of matter, the

nourisher, and show out the ceaseless providing of Nature for all her children's needs. As the great Father and Mother of all protect and nourish their world, so are the parents to the children in the home where the spiritual life is beginning to grow. Thus might all life be made fair; and every man and woman who begins to show the spiritual life becomes a benediction in the home and in the world.

The second great step that men may take, when duty is done for duty's sake, is that which adds joy to duty—the fulfilment of the Law of Sacrifice; that noblest, highest, view of life, which sees one's self not as the Divine Life merely in activity in the world, but as the Divine Life that sacrifices Itself that all may live. For it is written that the dawn of the universe is an act of sacrifice, and the support of the universe is the continual sacrifice of the all-pervading Spirit that animates the whole. And when that mighty sacrifice is realised as the life of the universe, what joy more full and passionate than to throw oneself into the sacrifice and have a share in it, however small, to be part of the sacrificial life by which the worlds evolve. Well might it be said by those who see life, and realise what it means: "Where, then, is sorrow, where then delusion, when once the one-ness has been seen?" That is the secret of the joy of the spiritual man. Losing everything outside, he wins everything within.

I have often said, and it remains true ever, that while the life of the form consists in taking, the life of the spirit consists in giving, and it is that which

made the Christ, as the type of the Spiritual Giver, declare : " It is more blessed to give than to receive." For truly, those who know the joy of giving have no hankering after the joy of receiving; they know the upwelling spring of joy unfailing that arises within the heart as the Life pours out. For if the Divine Life could flow into us and we keep it within ourselves, it would become even as the mountain-stream becomes if it be caught in some place whence it may not issue, and gradually grows stagnant, sluggish, dead; but the life through which the Divine Life pours unceasing, knows no stagnation and no weariness, and the more it outpours the more it receives. Let us not, then, be afraid to give. The more we give the fuller shall be our life. Let us not be deluded by the world of separateness, where everything grows less as we give it. If I had gold, my store would lessen with every coin that I give away; but that is not so with things of the spirit; the more we give, the more we have; each act of gift makes us a larger reservoir. Thus we need have no fear of becoming empty, dry, exhausted; for all life is behind us, and its springs are one with us; once we know the life is not ours, once we realise that we are part of a mighty unity, then comes the real joy of living, then the true blessedness of the life that knows its own eternity. All the small pleasures of the world which once were so attractive fade away in the glory of the true living, and we know that those great words are true : " He who loseth his life shall find it unto life eternal."

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On the Idyll of the  
White Lotus

BY

T. SUBBA RAO

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## On The Idyll of the White Lotus

THE interesting story published under the title above mentioned has already attracted considerable attention. It is instructive in more ways than one. It truly depicts the Egyptian Faith and the Egyptian priesthood, when their religion had already begun to lose its purity and degenerate into a system of Tāntric worship, contaminated and defiled by black magic, unscrupulously used for selfish and immoral purposes. It is probably also a true story. Sensa is represented to be the last great hierophant of Egypt. Just as a tree leaves its seed to develop into a similar tree, even if it should perish completely, so does every great religion seem to leave its life and energy in one or more great Adepts, destined to preserve its wisdom and revive its growth at some future time, when the cycle of evolution tends in the course of its revolution to bring about the desired result. The grand old religion of Khem is destined to reappear on this planet in a higher and nobler form when the appointed time arrives, and there is nothing unreasonable in

the supposition that the *Sensa* of our story is probably now a very high Adept, who is waiting to carry out the commands of the Lady of the White Lotus. Apart from these speculations, however, the story in question has a very noble lesson to teach. In its allegorical aspect it describes the trials and the difficulties of a neophyte. It is not easy, however, for the ordinary reader to remove the veil of allegory and clearly understand its teachings. It is to help such readers that I proceed to give the following explanation of the characters that appear in the story in question and the events therein related.

1. *Sensa*, the hero of the story, is intended to represent the human soul. It is the *Kūtaṣṭha Chaṭanyam*, or the germ of *Prajñā*, in which the individuality of the human being is preserved. It corresponds with the higher and permanent element in the fifth principle of man. It is the ego or the self of embodied existence.

2. *Seboua*, the gardener, is intuition. "They cannot make a phantom of me," declares *Seboua*; and in saying so this unsophisticated but honest rustic truly reveals his own mystery.

3. *Agdmahd*, *Kamen-Baka* and the nine other high priests of the temple, who are the devoted servants of the dark goddess whom they worship, represent respectively the following entities :

(1) *Kāma* .. ... Desire.

(2) *Krodha* . .. .. Hate.

(3)	<i>Loḥha</i>	Cupidity.
(4)	<i>Maha</i>	Ignorance.
(5)	<i>Maḍa</i>	Arrogance.
(6)	<i>Mṛtsariya</i>	Jealousy.
(7, 8, 9, 10 & 11)		The five senses and their pleasures.

4. The female characters that figure in the story are the following

- (1) The dark and mysterious goddess worshipped by the priests.
- (2) The young girl who played with Sensa.
- (3) The grown-up girl met by him in the city.
- (4) The Lady of the White Lotus.

It must be noticed here that the second and the third are identical. Speaking of the fair woman of the city, whom he met apparently for the first time, Sensa says that, as he gazed into her tender eyes, it seemed to him that he knew her well and that her charms were familiar to him. It is clear from this statement that this lady is no other than the young girl who ran about the temple with him.

Prakṛtī, say the Hīndū philosophers, has three qualities : sattva, rajas and tamas. The last of these qualities is connected with the grosser pleasures and passions experienced in sṭhūlasharīra. Rajagūṇa is the cause of the restless activity of the mind, while Saṭṭvagūṇa is intimately associated with the spiritual intelligence of man, and with his higher and nobler

aspirations. Māyā, then, makes its appearance in this story in three distinct forms. It is Vidyā, a spiritual intelligence, which is represented by the Lady of the White Lotus. It is the Kwan-yin, and the Prajñā of the Buddhist writers. She represents the light or the aura of the Logos, which is wisdom, and she is the source of the current of conscious life or Chaitanyam. The young girl above referred to is the mind of man, and it is by her that Sensa is led gradually into the presence of the dark goddess, set up in the Holy of holies for adoration by the priesthood whom we have above described.

The dark goddess herself is avidyā. It is the dark side of human nature. It derives its life and energy from the passions and desires of the human soul. The ray of life and wisdom, which originally emanated from the Logos and which has acquired a distinct individuality of its own when the process of differentiation has set in, is capable of being transformed more or less entirely into this veritable Kālī, if the light of the Logos is altogether excluded by the bad karma of the human being, if the voice of intuition is unheard and unnoticed, and if the man lives simply for the purpose of gratifying his own passions and desires.

If these remarks are kept in mind, the meaning of the story will become clear. It is not my object now to write an exhaustive commentary. I shall only notice some of the important incidents and their significance.

Look upon Sensa as a human being, who, after running his course through several incarnations, and after having passed through a considerable amount of spiritual training, is born again in this world with his spiritual powers of perception greatly developed, and prepared to become a neophyte at a very early stage in his career. As soon as he enters into the physical body, he is placed under the charge of the five senses and the six emotions above enumerated, who have it as their place of residence. The human soul is first placed under the guidance of his own intuition, the simple and honest gardener of the temple, for whom the High Priests seem to have no respect or affection, and, when it has not yet lost its original purity, gets a glimpse of its spiritual intelligence, the Lady of the White Lotus. The priests, however, are determined that no opportunity should be given for the intuition to work, and they therefore remove the child from his guardianship and introduce him to their own dark goddess, the goddess of human passion. The very sight of this deity is found repulsive to the human soul at first. The proposed transfer of human consciousness and human attachment from the spiritual plane to the physical plane is too abrupt and premature to succeed. The priests failed in their first attempt and began to devise their plans for a second effort in the same direction.

Before proceeding further I must draw the reader's attention to the real meaning of the Lotus tank in

the garden. Sahasrāra chakram in the brain is often spoken of as a Lotus tank in the Hindū mystical books. The "sweet sounding water" of this tank is described as Amṛtam or nectar. See p. 349 of the second volume of *Isis Unveiled* for further hints as regards the meaning of this magic water. Padma, the White Lotus, is said to have a thousand petals, as has the mysterious Sahasrāram of the Yogīs. It is an unopened bud in the ordinary mortal, and just as a lotus opens its petals and expands in all its bloom and beauty when the sun rises above the horizon and sheds his rays on the flower, so does the Sahasrāram of the neophyte open and expand when the Logos begins to pour its light into its centre. When fully expanded it becomes the glorious seat of the Lady of the Lotus, the sixth principle of man; and sitting on this flower the great goddess pours out the waters of life and grace for the gratification and the regeneration of the human soul.

Hatha Yogīs say that the human soul in *samādhi* ascends to this thousand-petalled flower through Suṣhumnā (the *dath* of the Kabbalists), and obtains a glimpse of the splendour of the spiritual sun.

In this part of Sensa's life an event is related which deserves attention. An elemental, appearing in the guise of a neophyte of the temple, tries to take him out from his physical body. This is a danger to which a man is liable before he acquires sufficient proficiency as an adept to guard himself against all

such dangers, especially when his internal perception is developed to a certain extent. Sensa's guardian angel protects him from the danger owing to his innocence and purity.

When the mental activity of the child commences and absorbs its attention, it recedes farther and farther from the Light of the Logos. Its intuition will not be in a position to work unshackled. Its suggestions come to it mixed up with other states of consciousness which are the result of sensation and intellection. Unable to see Sensa and speak to him personally, Seboua sends him his beloved lotus flower surreptitiously through one of the neophytes of the temple.

Mental activity commences first by way of sensation. Emotions make their appearance subsequently. The opening mind of the child is aptly compared to a little girl playing with Sensa. When once the mind begins to exercise its functions, the pleasures of sensation soon pave the way for the strong and fierce emotions of the human soul. Sensa has descended one step from the spiritual plane when he loses sight of the sublime lotus flower and its glorious goddess and begins to be amused by the frolicsome little girl. "You are to live among Earth-fed flowers," says this little girl to him, disclosing the change that has already taken place. At first it is the simple beauty of Nature that engrosses the attention of Sensa. But his mind soon leads him to the dark goddess of the

shrine. Avidyā has its real seat in mind, and it is impossible to resist its influence so long as the mind of man is not restrained in its action. When once the soul gets under the influence of this dark goddess, the high priests of the temple begin to utilise its powers for their own benefit and gratification. The goddess requires twelve priests in all, including Sensa, to help her cause. Unless the six emotions and the five sensations above enumerated are banded together, she cannot exercise her sway completely. They support and strengthen each other, as every man's experience clearly demonstrates. Isolated, they are weak and can easily be subdued, but when associated together their combined power is strong enough to keep the soul under control. The fall of Sensa now becomes complete, but not before he receives a well-merited rebuke from the gardener and a word of warning from the Lady of the Lotus.

Addressing Sensa, Seboua is made to utter the following words : " You came first to work ; you were to be the drudge for me ; now all is changed. You are to play, not work, and I am to treat you like a little prince. Well ! have they spoiled thee yet, I wonder, child ? " These words are significant ; and their meaning will become plain by the light of the foregoing remarks. It must be noted that the last time he went into the garden, Sensa was taken, not to the Lotus Tank, but to another tank receiving its waters from the former.

Owing to the change that has come over him, Sensa is unable to see the Light of the Logos by direct perception, but is under the necessity of recognising the same by the operation of his fifth principle. It is in the astral fluid that he floats, and not in the magic water of the Lotus Tank. He sees, nevertheless, the Lady of the Lotus, who pathetically says : “ Soon thou wilt leave me ; and how can I aid thee if thou forgettest me utterly ”

After this occurrence Sensa becomes completely a man of the world, living for the pleasures of the physical life. His developed mind becomes his companion and the priests of the temple profit by the change. Before proceeding further I must draw the reader's attention to the possibility of eliciting from a child any desired information by invoking certain elementals and other powers, by means of magic rites and ceremonies. After the soul gets completely under the influence of Avidyā, it may either succumb altogether to the said influence, and get absorbed, as it were, in the Tamoguṇa of Prakṛti, or dispel its own ignorance by the light of spiritual wisdom and shake off this baneful influence. A critical moment arrives in the history of Sensa when his very existence is merged for the time being with the dark goddess of human passion on the day of the boat festival. Such an absorption, however short, is the first step towards final extinction. He must either be saved at this critical juncture or perish. The Lady of the White

Lotus, his guardian angel, makes a final attempt to save him and succeeds. In the very Holy of holies, she unveils the dark goddess ; and Sensa, perceiving his folly, prays for deliverance from the accursed yoke of the hated priesthood. His prayer is granted, and relying upon the support of the bright goddess, he revolts against the authority of the priests, and directs the attention of the people to the iniquities of the temple authorities.

It is necessary to say a few words in this connection as regards the real nature of soul-death and the ultimate fate of a black magician, to impress the teachings of this book on the mind of the reader. The soul, as we have above explained, is an isolated drop in the ocean of cosmic life. This current of cosmic life is but the light and the aura of the Logos. Besides the Logos, there are innumerable other existences, both spiritual and astral, partaking of this life and living in it. These beings have special affinities with particular emotions of the human soul and particular characteristics of the human mind. They have of course a definite individual existence of their own which lasts up to the end of the Manvantara. There are three ways in which a soul may cease to retain its special individuality. Separated from its Logos, which is, as it were, its source, it may not acquire a strong and abiding individuality of its own, and may in course of time be re-absorbed into the current of Universal Life. This is real soul-death.

It may also place itself *en rapport* with a spiritual or elemental existence by evoking it, and concentrating its attention and regard on it for purposes of black magic and Tāntric worship. In such a case it transfers its individuality to such existence and is sucked up into it, as it were. In such a case the black magician lives in such a being, and as such a being he continues till the end of Manvantara.

The fate of Bāṇasena illustrates the point. After his death he is said to live as Mahākāla, one of the most powerful spirits of Pramadhagana. In some respects this amounts to acquiring immortality in evil. But, unlike the immortality of the Logos, it does not go beyond Manvantaric limits. Read the eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in this connection, and my meaning will become clear by the light of Kṛṣṇa's teaching. The occurrence in the boat of Isis, depicted in the book under consideration, gives some idea of the nature of this absorption and the subsequent preservation of the magician's individuality.

When the centre of absorption is the Logos and not any other power or elemental, the man acquires Mukti or Nīrvāṇa and becomes one with the eternal Logos without any necessity of rebirth.

The last part of the book describes the final struggle of the soul with its inveterate foes, its initiation and ultimate deliverance from the tyranny of Prakṛti.

The assurance and the advice given by the Lady of the White Lotus to Sensa in the Holy of holies

marks the great turning-point in the history of his career. He has perceived the light of the Divine Wisdom and has brought himself within the pale of its influence. This light of the Logos, which is represented in the story as the fair goddess of the sacred flower of Egypt, is the bond of union and brotherhood which maintains the chain of spiritual intercourse and sympathy running through the long succession of the great hierophants of Egypt, and extending to all the great Adepts of this world who derive their influx of spiritual life from the same source. It is the Holy Ghost that keeps up the Apostolic Succession, or Guruparampara as the Hindūs call it. It is this spiritual light which is transmitted from Guru to disciple when the time of real Initiation comes. The so-called "transfer of life" is no other than the transmission of this light. And further, the Holy Ghost, which is as it were the veil or the body of the Logos, and hence its flesh and blood, is the basis of the Holy Communion. Every Fraternity of Adepts has this bond of union; and time and space cannot tear it asunder. Even when there is an apparent break in the succession on the physical plane, a neophyte, following the sacred law and aspiring towards a higher life, will not be in want of guidance and advice when the proper time arrives, though the last Guru may have died several thousands of years before he was born. Every Buddha meets at his last Initiation all the great Adepts who reached

Buddhaship during the preceding age; and similarly every class of Adepts has its own bond of spiritual communion which knits them together into a properly organised Fraternity. The only possible and effectual way of entering into any such Brotherhood, or partaking of the holy communion, is by bringing oneself within the influence of the spiritual light which radiates from one's own Logo- I may further point out here, without venturing to enter into details, that such communion is only possible between persons whose souls derive their life and sustenance from the same divine ray, and that, as seven distinct rays radiate from the "Central Spiritual Sun," all Adepts and Dhyān Chohans are divisible into seven classes, each of which is guided, controlled and overshadowed by one of seven forms or manifestations of the divine wisdom.

In this connection it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to another general law which regulates the circulation of spiritual life and energy through the several Adepts who belong to the same Fraternity. Each Adept may be conceived of as a centre wherein this spiritual force is generated and stored up, and through which it is utilised and distributed. This mysterious energy is a kind of spiritual electrical force, and its transmission from one centre to another presents some of the phenomena noticed in connection with electrical induction. Consequently there is a tendency towards the equalisation of the amounts of energy stored up in the various centres.

The quantity of the neutral fluid existing in any particular centre depends upon the man's karma and the holiness and purity of his life. When evoked into activity by being brought into communication with his Guru or Initiator, it becomes dynamic, and has a tendency to transfer itself to weaker centres. It is sometimes stated that, at the time of the final Initiation, either the Hierophant or the "newly-born," the *worthier* of the two, must die (see page 38, *The Theosophist*, November, 1882). Whatever may be the real nature of this mysterious death, it is due to the operation of this law. It will be further seen that a new Initiate, if he is weak in spiritual energy, is strengthened by partaking of the holy communion; and for obtaining this advantage he has to remain on earth and utilise his power for the good of mankind until the time of final liberation arrives. This is an arrangement which harmonises with the law of karma. The neophyte's original weakness is due to his kârmic defects. These defects necessitate a longer period of physical existence. And this period he will have to spend in the cause of human progress in return for the benefit above indicated. And, moreover, the accumulated good karma of this period has the effect of strengthening his soul, and when he finally takes his place in the Sacred Brotherhood, he brings as much spiritual capital with him as any of the others for carrying on the work of the said Fraternity.

If these few remarks are borne in mind, the incidents related in the last five chapters will soon disclose their real significance. When Sensa gains his power of spiritual perception through the grace of his guardian angel, and begins to exercise it knowingly and voluntarily, he has no occasion to rely on the flickering light of intuition. "You must now stand alone," says the gardener, and places him in possession of his beloved flower, the full meaning of which Sensa begins to understand. Having thus gained the seat of spiritual clairvoyance, Sensa perceives into the hierophants who preceded him and into whose Fraternity he has entered. The Guru is always ready when the disciple is ready. The Initiation preceding the final struggle for liberty from the bondage of matter is pretty plainly described. The highest Chohan reveals to him the secrets of occult science, and another Adept of the Brotherhood points out to him the real basis and nature of his own personality. His immediate predecessor then comes to his assistance and reveals to him the mystery of his own Logos. "The veil of Isis" is removed; the White Lotus, his real Saviour, lay concealed. The Light of the Logos enters his soul and he is made to pass through the "baptism by Divine Fire". He hears the final directions given by his Queen and recognises the duty cast upon his shoulders.

His predecessor, whose soul is so "white and spotless," is commanded to give him a portion of his

spiritual strength and energy. The three great truths which underlie every religion, however disfigured and distorted, through ignorance, superstition and prejudice, are then taught to him for the purpose of being proclaimed to the world at large. It is needless for me to explain these truths here, as their enunciation in the book is sufficiently plain. Thus fortified and instructed, Sensa prepares for the final struggle. During these preparatory stages the passions of the physical man are, as it were, dormant, and Sensa is left alone for the time being. But they are not entirely subdued. The decisive battle is yet to be fought and won. Sensa begins to enter on the higher spiritual life as a preacher and spiritual guide to men, directed by the light of wisdom which has entered his soul. But he cannot pursue this course for any length of time before he has conquered his foes. The moment for the final struggle of the last Initiation soon arrives. The nature of this Initiation is very little understood. It is sometimes represented in vague terms as a terrible ordeal through which an Initiate has to pass before he becomes a real Adept. It is further characterised as "the baptism by blood". These general statements do not in the least indicate the precise nature of the result to be achieved by the neophyte or the difficulties he has to encounter.

It is necessary to enquire into the nature of the psychic change or transformation which is intended

to be effected by this Initiation before its mystery is understood. According to the ordinary Vedāntic classification there are four states of conscious existence, *viz.*, *Vishwa*, *Tajasa*, *Prājña* and *Turiya*. In modern language these may be described as the objective, the clairvoyant, the ecstatic, and the ultra-ecstatic states of consciousness. The seats or *upādhis* related to these conditions are the physical body, the astral body, the *kāraṇa śarīra* or the monad, and the *Logos*. The soul is the monad. It is, as it were, the neutral point of consciousness. It is germ of *prajñā*. When completely isolated no consciousness is experienced by it. Its psychic condition is hence compared by Hindū writers to *Suṣhupti*—a condition of dreamless sleep. But it is under the influence of the physical body and the astral body on the one side, and the sixth and seventh principles on the other. When the attraction of the former prevails, the *jīva* becomes *Baddha*, and is subject to all the passions of embodied existence. The power of these passions grows weaker and weaker as the neutral point we have indicated is approached. But so long as the neutral barrier is not crossed, their attraction is felt. But when once this is effected, the soul is, as it were, placed under the control and attraction of the other pole—the *Logos*; and the man becomes liberated from the bondage of matter. In short he becomes an Adept. The struggle for supremacy between these two forces of attraction takes place on

this neutral barrier. But during the struggle the person in whose interest the battle is fought is in a quiescent, unconscious condition, almost helpless to assist his friends or strike hard at his enemies, though the result of the fight is a matter of life and death to him. This is the condition in which *Sensa* finds himself in passing through the last ordeal, and the description of the said condition in the book under examination becomes clear by the light of the foregoing explanations. It can be easily seen that the result of the fight will mainly depend upon the *latent* energy of the soul, its previous training and its past karma. But our hero passes successfully through the ordeal, his enemies are completely overthrown. But *Sensa* dies in the struggle.

Strangely enough, when the enemy is defeated, the personality of *Sensa* is destroyed on the field of battle. This is the final sacrifice which he makes, and his mother, *Prakṛti*—the mother of his personality—laments his loss, but rejoices at the prospect of the resurrection of his soul. The resurrection soon takes place; his soul rises from the grave as it were, under the vivifying influence of his spiritual intelligence, to shed its blessings on mankind and work for the spiritual development of his fellow-beings. Here ends the so-called tragedy of the soul. What follows is merely intended to bring the story in its quasi-historical aspect to a proper conclusion.

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# The Power and Use of Thought

BY

C. W. LEADBEATER

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# The Power and Use of Thought

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THOSE who are ignorant of Theosophy sometimes suppose it to be merely a system of speculative philosophy. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this; there is nothing in any way speculative about it, for it is founded entirely upon observation of facts, and upon experiments made in connection with the phenomena and the forces of Nature. From its study emerges a practical rule of life—a rule which cannot but affect the thought and action of its students at every moment of their existence. This is chiefly because it involves a study of life as it really is, so that its students become acquainted with the whole of the world in which they live, instead of knowing only the least important part of it. They are led to understand the laws of evolution; and they naturally learn to live intelligently in accordance with those laws, and to take into account the unseen part of the world as well as the infinitesimal portion

which is within reach of the limited physical senses.

Of the general nature of the unseen world I have written elsewhere. For the moment, let us concentrate our attention on one of its most striking characteristics—the ready response of the finer types of matter (of which it is constructed) to the influences of human thought and emotion. It is difficult for those who have not studied the subject to grasp the absolute reality of these forces—to understand that they are in every respect as definite in their action upon the finer type of matter as is the power of steam or electricity over physical matter. Every one knows that a man who has at his disposal a large amount of steam power or electrical power can do useful work and produce definite results; but few people know that every man has at his disposal a certain amount of this other and higher power, and that with that he can produce results just as definite and just as real. As matters stand at present in the physical world, only a few men can have at their disposal any large amount of its forces, and so only a few can become rich by their means; but it is a prominent feature of the vivid interest of the unseen side of life, that every human being, rich or poor, old or young, has already at his disposal no inconsiderable

proportion of its forces. And therefore the riches of these higher planes, which are obtained by the right use of these powers, are within the reach of all.

Here, then, is a power possessed by all, but intelligently used as yet by few. It is surely well worth our while to take up the matter, to enquire into it, and to try to comprehend it. Indeed there is even more reason for so doing than has yet been mentioned; for the truth is that to some extent we are all already unconsciously making use of this power, and because of our ignorance we are employing it wrongly, and doing harm with it instead of good. The possession of power always means responsibility; so in order to avoid doing harm unintentionally, and in order to utilise thoroughly these magnificent possibilities, it will clearly be well for us to learn all that we can on this subject.

What, then, is THOUGHT, and how does it show itself? Those who have even a superficial acquaintance with Theosophical literature are aware that man possesses a vehicle corresponding to each of the interpenetrating worlds of our solar system—that his astral body is the vehicle of his desires, passions, and emotions; and that his thought expresses itself through that higher vehicle of still finer matter which we usually call the

mental body. It is in this latter vehicle that thought first shows itself to the sight of the clairvoyant; and it appears as a vibration of its matter—a vibration which is found to produce various effects, all of them quite in line with what scientific experience in the physical world would lead us to expect.

First there is the effect produced upon the mental body itself; and we find that to be of the nature of setting up a habit. There are many different types of matter in the mental body, and each of them appears to have its own special rate of oscillation, to which it seems most accustomed, so that it readily responds to it and tends to return thereto as soon as possible when it has been forced away from it by some strong rush of thought or feeling. A sufficiently strong thought may for the moment set the whole of the matter of the mental body swinging at the same rate; and every time that that happens it is a little easier for it to happen again. A habit of vibrating at that rate is being set up in the mental body, so that the man will readily repeat that particular thought.

Secondly, there is the effect produced upon the other vehicles of the man, which are above and below the mental body in degree of density. We know that in the physical world disturbances in one type of matter are readily communicated to another type—that, for example, an earthquake

will produce a mighty wave in the sea; and again (from the other side) that the disturbance of the air by a storm will immediately produce ripples, and presently great waves, in the ocean beneath it. In just the same way a disturbance in a man's astral body (that is to say, what we commonly call an emotion) will set up undulations in the mental body, and cause thoughts which correspond to the emotion. Conversely, the movement in the mental body affects the astral body, if it be of a type which can affect it—which means that certain types of thought will readily provoke emotion. Just as the mental vibration acts upon the astral matter, which is denser than it is, so also does it inevitably act upon the matter of the causal body, which is finer than it. Thus the habitual thought of the man builds up qualities in the ego himself.

So far, we have been dealing with the effect of the man's thought upon himself; and we see that in the first place it tends to repeat itself, and that in the second place it acts not only upon his emotions, but also permanently upon the man himself. Now let us turn to the effects which it produces outside of himself—that is, upon the sea of mental matter which surrounds us all, just as does the atmosphere.

Thirdly, then, every thought produces a radiating undulation, which may be either simple or

complex according to the nature of the thought that gives it birth. This vibration may under certain conditions be confined to the mental world, but also it may produce an effect in worlds above and below. If the thought be purely intellectual and impersonal—if, for example, the thinker is considering a philosophical system, or attempting to solve a problem in algebra or geometry—the wave sent forth will affect merely the mental matter. If the thought be of a spiritual nature, if it be tinged with love or aspiration, or with deep unselfish feeling, it will rise upwards into the realm of the higher mental, and may even borrow some of the splendour and glory of the intuitional level—a combination which renders it exceedingly powerful. If, on the other hand, the thought is tinged with something of self or of personal desire, its oscillations at once draw downwards and expend most of their force in the astral world.

All these undulations act upon their respective levels just as does a vibration of light or sound here in the physical world. They radiate out in all directions, becoming less powerful in proportion to their distance from their source. But we should remember that the radiations affect not only the sea of mental matter which surrounds us, but also act upon other mental bodies moving within that sea. We are all familiar with the experiment in which a note struck on a piano,

or a string sounded on a violin, will set the corresponding note sounding upon another instrument of the same kind, which has been tuned exactly to the same pitch. Just as the vibration set up in one instrument is conveyed through the air and acts upon the other instrument, so is the thought-vibration set up in one mental body conveyed by the surrounding mental matter and reproduced in another mental body—which, stated from another point of view, means that thought is infectious. We will return to this consideration later.

Fourthly, every thought produces not only an undulation but a form—a definite, separate object, which is endowed with force and vitality of a certain kind, and in many cases behaves like a temporary living creature. This form, like the vibration, may be in the mental world only; but much more frequently it descends to the astral level and produces its principal effect in the world of emotions. The study of these thought-forms is of exceeding interest; a detailed account of many of them, with coloured illustrations of their appearance, will be found in a book called *Thought-Forms*, which can be had at *The Theosophist Office*. At the moment, we are concerned less with their appearance than with their effects and with the way in which they can be utilised.

Let us consider separately the action of these two manifestations of thought-power. The vibration may be simple or it may be complex, according to the character of the thought; but its strength is poured out chiefly upon some one of the four levels of mental matter—the four subdivisions which constitute the lower part of the mental world. Most of the thoughts of the ordinary man centre round himself, his desires, and his emotions, and they are therefore undulations of the lowest subdivision of mental matter; indeed, the corresponding part of the mental body is the only one which is as yet fully developed and active in the great majority of mankind. It must not be forgotten that in this respect the condition of the mental body is very different from that of the astral vehicle. In the ordinary cultured man of our race the astral body is as fully developed as the physical, and the man is perfectly capable of using it as a vehicle of consciousness. He is not yet much in the habit of so using it, and is consequently shy about it and distrustful of his powers; but the astral powers are all there, and it is simply a question of becoming accustomed to their use. When he finds himself functioning in the astral world either during sleep or after death, he is fully capable of sight and hearing, and can move about whithersoever he will.

In the heaven-world, however, he finds himself under very different conditions, for the mental body is as yet by no means fully developed, that being the part of its evolution upon which the human race is at the present moment engaged. The mental body can be employed as a vehicle only by those who have been specially trained in its use under Teachers belonging to the Great Brotherhood of Initiates; in the average man it is only partially developed, and cannot in the least be employed as a separate vehicle of consciousness. In the majority of men the higher portions of the mental body are as yet quite dormant, even when the lower portions are in vigorous activity. This necessarily implies that while the whole mental atmosphere is surging with vibrations belonging to the lowest subdivision, there is as yet comparatively little activity on the higher subdivisions—a fact which we shall need to have clearly in mind when we come to consider presently the practical possibility of the use of thought-power. It has also an important bearing upon the distance to which a thought-wave may penetrate.

The distance covered by such a wave, and the strength and persistence with which it can impinge upon the mental bodies of others, depend upon the strength and clearness of the original thought. In this respect it resembles the voice

of a speaker, setting in motion waves of sound in the air, which radiate from him in all directions, and convey his words to all those who are (as we say) within hearing; and the distance to which his voice can penetrate depends upon its strength and the clearness of his enunciation. In exactly the same way a strong thought will carry much farther than one which is weak and undecided; but clearness and distinctness are of even greater importance than strength. Again, just as the speaker's voice may fall upon heedless ears where men are already engaged in business or in pleasure, so may a strong wave of thought sweep past without affecting the mind of a man if he is already wholly engrossed in some other line of thought. Many men, however, do not think definitely or strongly except when in the immediate prosecution of some business that demands their whole attention, so that there are always within reach many minds that are liable to be considerably affected by the thoughts which impinge upon them.

The action of this undulation is eminently adaptable. It may exactly reproduce itself, if it finds a mental body which readily responds to it in every particular; but when this is not the case, it may nevertheless produce a decided effect along lines broadly similar to its own. Suppose

for example, that a Catholic kneels in devotion before an image of the Blessed Virgin. He sends rippling out from him in all directions strong devotional vibrations; if they strike upon the mental or astral body of another Catholic, they will arouse in him a thought and feeling identical with the original. But if they should strike upon a Christian of some other sect, to whom the image of the Blessed Virgin is unfamiliar, they will still awaken in him the sentiment of devotion, but that will follow along its accustomed channel, and be directed towards the Christ.

In the same way, if they should touch a Muhammadan they would arouse in him devotion to Allah, while in the case of a Hindū the object might be Kṛṣṇa, and in the case of a Pārsī, Ahuramazda. But they would excite devotion of some sort wherever there was a possibility of response to that idea. If, however, they should touch the mental body of a materialist, to whom the very idea of devotion in any form is unknown, they would still produce an elevating effect. They could not at once create a type of vibration to which the man was wholly unaccustomed, but their tendency would be to stir a higher part of his mental body into some sort of activity; and the effect, though less permanent than in the case of the sympathetic recipient, could not fail to be good.

The action of an evil or impure thought is governed by the same laws. A man who is so foolish as to allow himself to think of another with hatred or envy radiates a wave tending to provoke similar passions in others; and though his feeling of hatred be for someone quite unknown to these others, and so it is impossible that they should share it, yet the radiation will stir in them an emotion of the same nature towards a totally different person.

The work of the thought-form is more limited, but much more precise than that of the undulation. It cannot reach so many persons—indeed we may say that it cannot act upon a person at all unless he has in him something which is harmonious with the vibrant energy which ensouls it. The powers and possibilities of these thought-forms will perhaps be clearer to us if we attempt to classify them. Let us consider first the thought which is definitely directed towards another person—as when a man sends forth from himself a thought of affection or of gratitude (or unfortunately it may be sometimes of envy or jealousy) towards someone else. Such a thought will produce radiating waves precisely as would any other, and will therefore tend to reproduce itself in the minds of those within the sphere of its influence. But the thought-form which it creates is imbued with

definite intention, as it were ; and as soon as it breaks away from the mental and astral bodies of the thinkers it goes straight towards the person to whom it is directed, and fastens itself upon him.

It may be compared not inaptly to a Leyden jar with its charge of electricity—the matter of the mental and astral worlds forming the body, which is symbolised by the jar, and the vibrant energy of the thought which ensouls it corresponding to the charge of electricity. If the man towards whom it is directed is at the moment in a passive condition, or if he has within him active oscillations of a character harmonious with its own, it will at once discharge itself upon him. Its effect will naturally be to provoke an undulation similar to its own if none such previously existed, and to intensify it if it is already to be found there. If the man's mind is for the time so strongly occupied along some other lines that it is impossible for the vibration to find an entrance, the thought-form hovers about him waiting for an opportunity to discharge itself.

In the case of a thought which is not directed to some other person, but is connected chiefly with the thinker himself (as indeed are the majority of man's thoughts), the undulation spreads in all directions as usual, but the thought-form

floats in the immediate neighbourhood of its creator, and its tendency is constantly to react upon him. As long as his mind is fully occupied with business, or with a thought of some other type, the floating form simply bides its time; but when his train of thought is exhausted, or his mind for a moment lies fallow, it has an opportunity to react upon him, and immediately it begins to repeat itself—to stir up in his mind a repetition of the thought to which he has previously yielded himself. Many a man may be seen surrounded by a shell of such thought-forms, and he will frequently feel their pressure upon him—a constant suggestion from without of certain thoughts; and if the thought be evil, he very likely believes himself to be tempted by the devil: whereas the truth is that he is his own tempter, and that the evil thoughts are entirely his own creation.

Thirdly, there is the class of thought which is neither centred round the thinker nor aimed specially at any person. The thought-form generated in this case does not hang about the thinker, nor has it any special attraction towards another man, so it simply remains idly floating where it was called into existence. Each man as he moves through life is thus producing three classes of thought-forms—those which shoot straight out away from him, aiming at a definite objective ;

those which hover round him and follow him wherever he goes; and those which he leaves behind him as a sort of trail which marks his route.

The whole atmosphere is filled with thought of this third type, vague and indeterminate; so that as we walk along we are, as it were, picking our way through vast masses of them; and if our minds are not already definitely occupied, these vague wandering fragments of other people's thought will seriously affect us. They sweep through the mind which is lying idle, and probably the majority of them do not arouse in it any especial interest; but now and then comes one which attracts attention, and the mind fastens upon it, entertains it for a moment or two, and dismisses it a little stronger than it was on arrival. Naturally this mixture of thought from many sources has no definite coherence—though it must be remembered that any one of these may start a line of associated ideas, and so set the mind thinking on its own account. If a man pulls himself up suddenly as he walks along the street, and asks himself: "What am I thinking about, and why? How did I reach this particular point in my train of thought?" and if he tries to follow back the line of his thoughts for the last ten minutes, he will probably be quite surprised to discover how many idle and

useless thoughts have passed through his mind in that space of time. They are, not one-fourth of them his own thoughts; they are simply those fragments which he has picked up as he passed along. In most cases they are quite valueless, and their general tendency is distinctly more likely to be evil than good.

Now that we understand to some extent the action of thought, let us see what use it is possible to make of this knowledge, and what practical considerations emerge from it. Knowing these things, what can we do to forward our own evolution, and what can we do to help others? Obviously, a scientific consideration of the way in which thought works exhibits it as a matter of far greater importance for evolution than we ordinarily suppose. Since every thought or emotion produces a permanent effect by strengthening or weakening a tendency, and since, furthermore, every thought-vibration and thought-form must inevitably react upon the thinker, the greatest care must be exercised as to the thought or emotion which the man permits within himself. The ordinary man rarely thinks of attempting to check an emotion; when he feels it surging within him he yields himself to it and considers it merely natural. One who studies scientifically the action of these forces realises that it is his interest as well as his duty to check

every such upwelling, and consider before he allows it to sway him whether it is or is not prejudicial to his evolution.

Instead of allowing his emotions to run away with him he must have them absolutely under control; and since the stage of evolution at which we have arrived is the development of the mental body, he must take this matter also seriously in hand and see what can be done to assist that development. Instead of allowing the mind to indulge in its vagaries he should endeavour to assert control over it, recognising that the mind is not the man, but is an instrument which the man must learn to use. It must not be left to lie fallow; it must not be allowed to remain idle, so that any passing thought-form can drift in upon it and impress it. The worthy Dr. Watts long ago remarked that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," and certainly there is truth in the saying when it is applied to these higher levels, for the mind which is left unoccupied is far more likely to take up evil impressions than good ones. The first step towards control of the mind is to learn to keep it usefully occupied—to have some definite good and useful set of thoughts as a background to the mind's operation—something upon which it shall always fall back when there is no immediate need for its activity in connection with duty to be done.

Another most necessary point in its training is that it shall be taught to do thoroughly that which it has to do—in other words, that the power of concentration shall be acquired. This is no light task, as any unpractised person will find who endeavours to keep his mind absolutely upon one point even for five minutes. He will find that there is an active tendency to wander—that all kinds of other thoughts thrust themselves in; the first effort to fix the mind on one subject for five minutes is likely to resolve itself into spending five minutes in bringing the mind back again and again from various side-issues which it has followed. Fortunately, though concentration itself is no easy thing, there are plenty of opportunities for attempting it, and the acquisition of it will be of great use in our daily life. We should learn then, whatever we are doing, to focus our attention upon it, and to do it with all our might and as well as it can be done; if we write a letter, let that letter be well and accurately written, and let no carelessness in detail delay it or mar its effect; if we are reading a book, even though it be only a novel, let us read it with attention, trying to grasp the author's meaning, and to gain from it all that there is to be gained. The endeavour to be constantly learning something, to let no day pass without some definite exercise of the

mind, is a most salutary one; for it is only by exercise that strength comes, and thus disuse means always weakness and eventual atrophy.

Another point of great importance is that we should learn to husband our energy. Each man possesses only a certain amount of energy, and he is responsible for its utilisation to the best advantage. The ordinary man wastes his force in the most foolish manner; but it is especially necessary for the student of occultism to learn to avoid this. The average man is simply a centre of agitated vibration; he is constantly in a condition of worry, of trouble about something, or in a condition of deep depression, or else he is unduly excited in the endeavour to grasp something. For one reason or another he is always in a state of unnecessary agitation, usually about the merest trifle. Although he never thinks about it, he is all the while influencing other people around him by this condition of his astral and mental bodies; he is constantly communicating these vibrations and this agitation to those unfortunate people who are near him. It is just because millions of people are thus unnecessarily agitated by all sorts of foolish desires and feelings that it is difficult for a sensitive person to live in a large city, or to go into a great crowd of his fellow-men.

Another way in which the average man wastes a great deal of force is by unnecessary

argument. It appears to be impossible for him to hold any opinion, whether it be religious or political, or relating to some matter in ordinary life, without becoming a prey to an overmastering desire to force this opinion upon everyone else. He seems quite incapable of grasping the rudimentary fact that what another man chooses to believe is no business of his, and that he is not commissioned by the authorities in charge of the world to go round and secure uniformity in thought and practice. The wise man realises that truth is a many-sided thing, not commonly held in its entirety by any one man, or by any one set of men; he knows that there is room for diversity of opinion upon almost any conceivable subject, and that therefore a man whose point of view is opposite to his own may nevertheless have something of reason and truth in his belief. He knows that most of the subjects over which men argue are not in the least worth the trouble of discussion, and that those who speak most loudly and most confidently about them are usually those who know least. The student of occultism will therefore decline to waste his time in argument; if he is asked for information he is quite willing to give it, but not to waste his time and strength in unprofitable wrangling.

Another painfully common method of wasting strength is in worry. Many men are constantly

forecasting evil for themselves and for those whom they love—troubling themselves with the fear of death and of what comes after it, with the fear of financial ruin or loss of social position. A vast amount of strength is frittered away along these unprofitable and unpleasant lines ; but all such foolishness is swept aside for the man who realises that the world is governed by a law of absolute justice, that progress towards the highest is the Divine Will for him, that he cannot escape from that progress, that whatever comes in his way and whatever happens to him is meant to help him along that line, and that he himself is the only person who can delay that advance. He no longer troubles and fears about himself and about others ; he simply goes on and does the duty that comes nearest in the best way that he can, confident that if he does that, all will be well for him. He knows that worry never yet helped anyone, nor has it ever been of the slightest use, but that it has been responsible for an immense amount of evil and waste of force.

The wise man declines to spend his strength in ill-directed emotion. For example, he will utterly decline to take offence at what is said or done by someone else. If another man says something which is untrue or offensive, it is certain that in nine cases out of ten there was

no evil intention behind the remark, so that it is not only foolish but unjust to be disturbed about it. Even in the rare case where the remark is intentionally wicked and spiteful—where the man said something purposely to wound another—it is still utterly foolish for that other to allow himself to feel hurt. The irritating word does not in any way injure him, except in so far as he may choose to take it up and injure himself by brooding over it or allowing himself to be wounded in his feelings. What are the words of another, that he should let his serenity be disturbed by them? If he permits himself to care about what another has said, then it is he himself who is responsible for the disturbance created in his mental body, and not the other man. The other has done and can do nothing that can harm him, and if the student feels hurt and injured, and thereby makes a great deal of trouble for himself, he has only himself to thank for it. If he suffers a disturbance to arise within his mental body or his astral body in reference to something that another has said, that is merely because he has not yet perfect control over his vehicles; he has not yet developed the common-sense which enables him to look down as a soul upon all this, and to go on his way and attend to his own work without taking the slightest notice of foolish or spiteful remarks made by others.

But this is after all only one side of the matter, and that the least important. It is certainly necessary for his own evolution that man should keep mind and emotion under control, and not foolishly waste his force; but it is assuredly still more necessary from another point of view, because it is only by such care that he can enable himself to be of use to his fellow-men, that he can avoid doing harm to them and can learn how to do good. If, for example, he lets himself feel angry, he naturally produces a serious effect upon himself, because he sets up an evil habit and makes it more difficult to resist the evil impulse next time it assails him. But he also acts seriously upon others around him, for inevitably the vibration which radiates from him must affect them also. If he is making an effort to control his irritability, so perhaps are they, and his action will help or hinder them, even though he is not in the least thinking of them. Every time that he allows himself to send out a wave of anger, that tends to arouse a similar vibration in the mind or astral body of another—to arouse it if it has not previously existed, and to intensify it if it is already present; and thus he makes his brother's work of self-development harder for him, and places a heavier burden upon his shoulders. On the other hand, if he controls and represses that wave

of anger, he radiates instead calming and soothing influences which are distinctly helpful to all those near him who are engaged in the same struggle.

Inevitably and without any effort of ours any thought which arises within our minds must be influencing the minds of others about us. Consider then the responsibility if a thought be impure or evil, for we are then spreading moral contagion among our fellow-men. Hundreds and thousands of people possess within them latent germs of evil—germs which may never blossom and bear fruit unless some force from without plays upon them and stirs them into activity. If we yield ourselves to an impure or unholy thought, the wave of force which we thus produce may be the very factor which awakens the germ and causes it to begin to grow, and so we may start some soul upon a downward career. The impulse so given may blossom out later into thoughts and words and deeds of evil, and these in their turn may injuriously affect thousands of other men even in the far distant future. We see then how terrible is the responsibility of a single impure or evil thought. Happily all this is true of good thought as well as of evil, and the man who realises this may set himself to work to be a veritable sun, constantly radiating upon all his neighbours thoughts of love and calm and peace. This is

a truly magnificent power, yet it is within the reach of every human being, of the poorest as well as the wealthiest, of the little child as well as the great sage.

Possessing this tremendous power, we must be careful how we exercise it. We must remember to think of a person as we wish him to be, for the image that we thus make of him will naturally act powerfully upon him and tend to draw him gradually into harmony with itself. Let us fix our thoughts upon the good qualities of our friends, because in thinking of any quality we tend to strengthen its undulations, and therefore to intensify it.

From this consideration it follows that the habit of gossip and scandal, in which many people thoughtlessly indulge themselves, is in reality a horrible wickedness, in condemning which no expression can be too strong. When people are guilty of the impertinence of discussing others, it is not usually upon the good qualities that they most insist. We have therefore a number of people fixing their thought upon some alleged evil in another, calling to that evil the attention of others who might perhaps not have observed it; and in this way, if that bad quality really exists in the person whom they are so improperly criticising, they distinctly increase it by strengthening the vibration which

is its expression. If, as is usually the case, the depravity exists only in their own prurient imagination, and is not present in the person about whom they are gossiping, then they are doing the utmost in their power to create that evil quality in that person, and if there be any latent germ of it existing in their victim, their nefarious effort is only too likely to be successful.

Assuredly we may think helpfully of those whom we love; we may hold before them in thought a high ideal of themselves, and wish strongly that they may presently be enabled to attain it. If we know of certain defects or vices in a man's character we should never under any circumstances let our thoughts dwell upon them and intensify them; on the contrary we should formulate a strong thought of the contrary virtues, and then send out waves of that thought to the man who needs our help. The ordinary method is for one to say to another:

"O my dear, what a terrible thing it is that Mrs. So-and-So is so ill-tempered! Why, do you know, only yesterday she did this and that, and I have heard that she constantly, etc., etc. Isn't it a terrible thing?"

And this is repeated by each person to her thirty or forty dearest friends, and in a few hours several hundred people are pouring converging streams

of thought, all about anger and irritability, upon the unfortunate victim. Is it any wonder that she presently justifies their expectations, and gives them yet another example of ill-temper over which they can gloat?

A man wishing to help in such a case will be especially careful to avoid the idea of anger, but will think with all his force: "I wish Mrs. So-and-So were calm and serene; she has the possibility of such self-control within her; let me try frequently to send her a strong calm soothing influence, such as will help her to realise the Divine possibility within her." In the one case the thought is of anger, and in the other case it is of serenity; in both alike it will inevitably find its goal, and tend to reproduce itself in the mental and astral bodies of the person of whom the thought is made. By all means let us think frequently and lovingly of our friends, but let us think of their good points, and try by concentrating our attention upon those to strengthen them and to help our friends by their means; let our criticism be of that happy kind which grasps at a pearl as eagerly as the criticism of the average man pounces upon an imaginary flaw.

A man will often say that he cannot control his thought or his passion, that he has often tried to do so, but has constantly failed, and

has therefore come to the conclusion that such effort is useless. This idea is wholly unscientific. If an evil quality or habit possesses a certain amount of strength within us, it is because in previous lives we have allowed that strength to accumulate—because we have not resisted it in the beginning, when it could easily have been repressed, but have permitted it to gather the momentum which makes it difficult now to deal with it.

We have, in fact, made it very easy for ourselves to move along a certain line, and correspondingly difficult to move along another line—difficult, but not impossible. The amount of momentum or energy accumulated is necessarily a finite amount; even if we have devoted several lives entirely to storing up such energy (an unlikely supposition), still the time so occupied has been a limited time, and the results are necessarily finite. If we have now realised the mistake we made, and are setting ourselves to control that habit and to counteract that impetus, we shall find it necessary to put forth exactly as much strength in the opposite direction as we originally spent in setting up that momentum. Naturally we cannot instantly produce sufficient force entirely to counteract the work of many years, but every effort which we make will reduce the amount of force stored up. We ourselves as

living souls can go on generating force indefinitely; we have an infinite store of strength on which to draw, and therefore it is absolutely certain that if we persevere we must eventually succeed. However often we may fail, each time something is withdrawn from that finite store of force, and it will be exhausted before we shall, so that our eventual success is simply a matter of mechanics.

You may have seen a railway porter, by steady and continuous pushing, set a big waggon or carriage in motion. Having brought it where he wishes, how does he stop it? It is quite impossible for him, even by the exertion of his utmost strength, to check it instantaneously; so he puts himself in front of it and pushes vigorously against it, walking backwards as its advance forces him along, but never ceasing to exert his force against that advance. Thus by degrees he counterbalances the momentum which he has himself produced in it, and so at last wins his victory and brings it to rest. A good object-lesson in the neutralisation of previous karma!

The knowledge of the use of these thought-currents makes it possible for us always to give assistance when we know of some case of sorrow or suffering. It very often happens that we are unable to do anything for the sufferer in the physical world; our physical presence may not

be helpful to him; his physical brain may be closed to our suggestions by prejudice or by religious bigotry. But his astral and mental bodies are far more easily impressible than the physical, and it is always open to us to approach these by a wave of helpful thought or of affection and soothing feeling.

We must not forget that the law of cause and effect holds good just as certainly in finer matter as in denser, and that consequently the energy which we pour forth must reach its goal and must produce its effect. There can be no question that the image or the idea which we wish to put before a man for his comfort or his help will reach him; whether it will present itself clearly to his mind when it arrives, depends first upon the definiteness of outline which we have been able to give to it, and secondly upon his mental condition at the time. He may be so fully occupied with thoughts of his own trials and sufferings that there is little room for our idea to insert itself; but in that case our thought-form simply bides its time, and when at last his attention is diverted, or exhaustion forces him to suspend the activity of his own train of thought, assuredly ours will slip in and will do its errand of mercy. There are so many cases where the best will in the world can do nothing physically for a sufferer; but there is no conceivable

case in which in either the mental or the astral world some relief cannot be given by steady concentrated loving thought.

The phenomena of mind-cure show how powerful thought may be even in the physical world, and since it acts so much more easily in astral and mental matter we may realise vividly how tremendous the power really is, if we will but exercise it. We should watch for an opportunity of being thus helpful; there is little doubt that plenty of cases will offer themselves. As we walk along the street, as we ride in a tram-car or a railway train, we may often see someone who is obviously suffering from depression or sadness; there is our opportunity, and we may immediately taken advantage of it by trying to arouse and to help him. Let us try to send him strongly the feeling that in spite of his personal sorrows and troubles the sun still shines above all, and there is still much for which to be thankful, much that is good and beautiful in the world. Sometimes we may see the instant effect of our effort—we may actually watch the man brighten up under the influence of the thought which we have sent to him. We cannot always expect such immediate physical result; but if we understand the laws of nature we shall in every case be equally sure that some result is being produced.

It is often difficult for the man who is unaccustomed to these studies to believe that he is really affecting those at whom his thought is aimed; but experience in a great number of cases has shown us that anyone who makes a practice of such efforts will in time find evidence of his success accumulating until it is no longer possible for him to doubt. Each man should make it part of his life thus to try to help all whom he knows and loves, whether they be what is commonly called living or what is commonly called dead; for naturally the possession or the absence of the physical body makes no difference whatever to the action of forces which are levelled at the mental and astral bodies. By steady regular practice great good will be done, for we gain strength by using it, and so while we are developing our own powers and ensuring our progress the world will be helped by our kindly efforts.

I remember seeing in an American book on mind-cure a passage which illustrates exceedingly well what should be the Theosophical attitude with regard to the duties and associations of daily life:

“Knead love into the bread you bake,” it ran; “wrap strength and courage in the parcel which you tie for the woman with the weary face; hand trust and candour with the coin that you pay to the man with the suspicious eyes.”

Quaint in expression, but lovely in its thought; truly the Theosophical concept that every connection is an opportunity, and that everyone whom we meet even casually is a person to be helped. Thus the student of the Good Law goes through life distributing blessings on all about him, doing good unobtrusively everywhere, though often the recipients of the blessing and the help may have no idea whence it comes. Never forget that in such benefactions every man can take his share, and every man ought to take his share; all who can think can send out kindly helpful thoughts, and no such thought has ever failed, or can ever fail while the laws of the universe hold. We may not always see the result, but the result is there, and we know not what fruit may spring from the tiny seed which we sow in passing along our path of Peace and Love.



ADYAR PAMPHLETS

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# The Value of Devotion

BY

ANNIE BESANT

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## The Value of Devotion

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AMONG the many forces which inspire men to activity, none, perhaps, plays a greater part than the feeling we call devotion—together with some feelings that often mask themselves under its name, though fundamentally differing from it in essence. The most heroic self-sacrifices have been inspired by it, while the most terrible sacrifices of others have been brought about by its pseudo-sister, fanaticism. It is as powerful a lever for raising a man as is the other for his degradation. The two sway mankind with overmastering power, and in some of their manifestations show an illusory resemblance; but the one has its roots in knowledge, the other in ignorance; the one bears the fruits of love, the other the poison-apples of hate.

A clear understanding of the nature of devotion is necessary, ere we are in a position to weigh its value and to distinguish it from the

false Duesha. We must trace it to its origin in human nature, and see in what part of that nature it takes its rise. We must know in order that we may practise; for as knowledge without practice is barren, so practice without knowledge is wasted. Emotion unregulated by knowledge, like a river overflowing its banks, spreads in every direction as a devastating flood, while emotion guided by knowledge is like the same river running in appointed channels and fertilising the land through which it flows.

If we study the inner nature of man, we find that it readily reveals three marked aspects that are distinguished from each other as the spiritual, the intellectual, and the emotional. On studying these further, we learn that the spiritual nature is that in which all the separate individualities inhere, that it is the common root, the unifying influence, that principle which, when developed, enables a man to realise in consciousness the oneness of all that lives. The intellectual nature may be said to be its antithesis; it is the individualising force in man, that which makes the many from the One. Its self-realisation is 'I,' and from this it sharply divides the 'not-I'. It knows itself apart, separate, and works best in isolation, drawn inwards, self-concentrated, indifferent to all without. Not herein can be found the root of devotion, of a feeling

which rushes outward; intellect can grasp, it cannot move. Remains the emotional nature, the energising force that causes action, that which feels. That it is which attracts us to an object, or repels us from it, and herein we shall find that devotion has its source. For as we study the emotional nature we see that it has two emotions—attraction and repulsion. It is ever moving us towards or away from objects surrounding us, according as those objects afford us pleasure or pain. All the feelings which draw us towards another fall under the head of attraction, and are forms of Love. All those which repel us from another fall under the head of repulsion, and are forms of Hate.

Now love takes different forms, and is called by different names, according as its object is above it, equal with it, or below it. Directed to those below it we name it pity, compassion, benevolence; directed to those equal with it, we call it friendship, passion, affection; directed to those above it, we style it reverence, adoration, devotion. Thus we trace devotion to its origin in the love-side of the emotional nature, and we define it as love directed to an object superior to the lover. When love is directed to the Teacher, to God, we rightly term it devotion; for then it is poured out before the superior, and shows in perfection the

characteristic of all love given to those who are greater than ourselves, the characteristic of self-surrender.

Here we have the touchstone by which we can separate it from the fanaticism which has inspired religious wars, religious persecutions religious animosities. These have their roots in hatred, not in love; they repel us from others instead of drawing us towards them. In the name of love to God men injure their fellows; but when we analyse the motive power of their actions we do not find it in their love, but in their sense that they are right and others wrong, in the separateness they feel from others, in the feeling of repulsion from them because of their supposed wrongness, i.e., in hate. Out of this come the bitter waters that sterilise the heart over which they flow. By this we can judge what we regard as devotion in ourselves; if it makes us humble, gentle, tolerant, friendly to all, then is it true devotion; if it makes us proud, harsh, separate, suspicious of all, then, however fair its seeming, it is dross, not gold.

Now devotion being a form of love, it can only flow out when an object presents itself which is attractive in its own nature, i.e., happiness-giving. All men seek happiness, and that attracts them, draws them towards itself, which

seems to them to make for happiness. Happiness is the feeling which accompanies the increase of life, and true and permanent bliss lies in union with the Self, the All-life, in conscious Self-identification with and expansion into the All; all efforts after happiness are efforts to unite with objects in order to absorb their life, thereby expanding the life that absorbs them. Happiness results from this union, because thereby the feeling of life is increased. Fundamentally the impulse to union comes from the Self, seeking to overpass the barriers which separate his selves on the lower planes, and the attraction between selves is the seeking by the Self in each of the Self in the other. "Lo! not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self the husband is dear. Lo! not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self the wife is dear." And so also with sons, wealth, Brāhmaṇas, Kṣhātriyas, the worlds, the Gods, the Vedas, the elements, until: "Lo! not for the sake of the All is the All dear, but for the sake of the Self the All is dear."<sup>1</sup> The Self seeks the Self, and this is the universal search for happiness, ever frustrated by the clash of form with form, the obstruction of the vehicles in which the separated selves abide.

<sup>1</sup> Brhadāraṇyakopanishat, VI, v, 6.

In order to draw out devotion, then, an object which is attractive must be presented to man, and we find such objects presented most completely in the revelations of the Supreme Self made through human form in the "God-Men" who appear from time to time—the Avatāras, or Divine Incarnations. Such beings are rendered supremely attractive by the beauty of character. They manifest, by the rays of the Self which shine through the human veil, imperfectly concealing their divine loveliness. When He who is Beauty and Love and Bliss shows a little portion of Himself on earth, encased in human form, the weary eyes of men light up, the tired hearts of men expand, with a new hope, a new vigour. They are irresistibly attracted to Him; devotion spontaneously springs up. Among Christians the intensity of religious devotion flows out to Christ, the Divine Man regarded as an incarnation of Deity, far more than to "God" in the abstract. It is His human side, His life and death, His sympathy and compassion, His gentle wisdom and patient sufferings, which stir men's hearts to a passion of devotion; as the "Man of Sorrows," the innocent and willing Sufferer, He wins perennially the love of men; it is the memory of Him as Man that holds men captive; as phrased by one of His devotees:

The Cross of Christ  
Is more to us than all His miracles.

And so in the God-Men of other faiths; it is Shrī Rāma the Divine King, Shrī Kṛṣṇa the Friend and Lover, who win the undying, passionate devotion of millions of human hearts. They render Deity attractive by softening its dazzling radiance into a light that human eyes can bear as it shines through the veil of humanity; they limit the divine attributes till they become small enough for the human intelligence to grasp. These stand as Objects of devotion, attracting love by Their perfect lovableness; They need only to be seen to be loved; where They are not loved it is merely because They are not seen. Devotion to Divine Men is not a matter for discussion or for argument, the moment one of Them is seen by the inner vision, the heart rushes out to Him and falls unbidden at His feet. Devotion may be cultivated by the reason, may be approved of and nurtured by the intelligence; but its primary impulse comes from the heart, not from the head, and flows out spontaneously to the Object that attracts it, to the shining of the Self through a translucent veil, to the Heart's Desire in manifested form.

Next, as objects of devotion, come the Teachers who, having Themselves obtained liberation, remain voluntarily within touch of humanity, retaining human bodies while the Jīvātmā enjoys nirvāṇic consciousness. They stand, as it were, between

the Avatāras and the earthly teachers who are Their disciples, and who have not yet reached liberation; but to the eyes of men on earth They are scarce distinguishable from the Avatāras Themselves, and They draw men with the same overmastering attraction. The Avatāra truly is greater, but that greatness lies on the side turned away from earth, and we can imagine no completer perfection than that of the Masters of the Wisdom.

Then come, in more constant physical communication with men, the teachers who are the immediate spiritual guides of those whose faces are turned to the steep path that leads to the heights, to the snowy mountains of human perfection. Still marred by weaknesses though they be, these have advanced sufficiently beyond their fellow-men to serve as their guides and helpers; and for the most part the earlier stages of progress are trodden by devotion to them. Further, as they are near the threshold of liberation, they will shortly pass into the class beyond them, and, as spiritual links are imperishable, will then be able, with added force, to draw their devotees after them. Love given to them strengthens and expands the nature of their lovers, and there is no surer path to devotion, in its highest meaning, than the love and trust given to the earthly teacher. Nowhere has this been realised so

strongly as in the East, where the love and service of the teacher have ever been held as necessary to spiritual progress. Much of the decay of modern India is due to the ignorance, the pride, the unspirituality of those who still wear the ancient name while devoid of all the qualities once implied by it; for as the best wine makes the sharpest vinegar, so is the degradation of the highest the lowest depth.

How shall devotion, then, be evoked and nourished? Only by meeting in the outer or inner world a fit object of devotion, and by yielding fully and unreservedly to the attraction it exercises. The glad and cordial recognition of excellence wherever found, the checking of the critical and carping spirit that fixes on defects and ignores virtues, these things prepare the soul to recognise his teacher when he appears. Many a one misses his teacher by the mental habit of fixing the attention on blemishes rather than on beauties, by seeing only the sun-spots and not the Sun. Further, the recognition of excellence shows the capacity to reproduce it; sympathetic vibrations are given out only by a string tuned to produce by itself a similar note; the soul knows his kin, even though they be older than himself, and only those akin to greatness are wakened by the great to response.

When the teacher is found and the tie with him is made, the first great step is taken. Then follows the steady culture of devotion to him, and through him to Those beyond and to the Supreme Self, manifested in form. This must never be forgotten, for the teacher is a means not an end, a transmitter not an originator of the divine light, a moon not a sun. He helps, strengthens, guides, evolves his pupil; but the end is the shining out of the Self in the disciple, the Self who is one, and is in teacher and disciple alike.

Devotion to the embodiment of the Self spoken of as the Avatāra may be nourished and increased by reading and meditating on His sayings and the incidents of His life on earth. It is a good plan to read over an incident and then vividly picture it in the mind, using the imagination to produce a full and detailed picture, and feeling one's self as present in it, a spectator or an actor therein. This "scientific use of the imagination" is a great provocative of devotion, and it actually brings the devotee into touch with the scene depicted; so that he may one day find himself scanning the ākāshic record of the event, a very part of that living picture, learning undreamed-of lessons from his presence there.

Another way of cultivating devotion is to be much in company with those in whom devotion

burns more brightly than in ourselves. As burning wood thrown into a smouldering fire will cause a flame to burst out brightly again, so the nearness of the warm fire of devotion in another rekindles the flagging energy of a weaker soul. Here again the disciple may gain much by frequenting the company of his teacher whose steadier force will energise his own. Nārada, in his admirable Sūtras, thus instructs us on the culture of devotion, and who should teach better than that ideal devotee?

Almost needless to add that the direct contemplation of, meditation on, and adoration of, the object of devotion quicken and intensify the love. In the hurry of modern life we are apt to forget the power of quiet thought, and to grudge the time necessary for its exercise. Thought of the one we love increases love, and the would be devotee must give time to the object of his devotion; and it is not his thought alone that is at work. As little can a plant grow without sunlight, as devotion without the warming and energising rays that stream from its object; the older soul pours out far more love than he receives, and his light and heat permeate and strengthen the younger soul. The teacher loves his disciple, and God loves His devotee, far more than the disciple loves his teacher, or the devotee his God. The love of the devotee for

his Lord is but a faint reflection of the love of Him who is Love itself. It is said that if a child throws a pebble to the ground, the whole great earth moves towards the pebble as well as draws the pebble to itself; attraction cannot be one-sided. In the spiritual world when man makes one step towards God, God makes a hundred steps towards man, for greatness there means greatness in giving, and the ocean pours forth its measureless depths towards any drop that seeks its bosom.

Having seen what devotion is, what its objects are, how it can be increased, we may fitly measure its value so as to find motive for attaining it.

Devotion changes the devotee into the likeness of the one he loves. Solomon, the wise Hebrew, declares that "as a man thinks so he is". The *Chhāṇḍogyopanishat* teaches that "man is created by thought; what he thinks of, that he becomes". But the intellect alone cannot easily be shaped into the likeness of the Supreme. As cold iron is hard, and incapable of being worked, but heated in the furnace becomes fluid and flows readily into any desired mould, so is it with the intellect. It must be melted in the fire of devotion, and then it will quickly be shaped into the likeness of the Beloved. Even love between equals, where it is strong and faithful

and long-continued, moulds them into each other's likeness; husband and wife become like each other, close friends grow similar each to each. And love directed to one above us exercises its transforming power still more forcibly, and easily shapes the nature it renders plastic into the likeness which is enshrined in the heart.

Devotion prevents the making of new karma, and when the old is exhausted the devotee is free. The great Christian teacher, S. Paul, writing of himself, declared that he no longer lived but Christ lived in him; and this saying becomes true of each devotee as his devotion leads him to surrender himself utterly to the one he loves. He thinks of his body not as his, but as an instrument used by his Lord for the world's helping; all his actions are done because they are the duty given him by his Beloved; does he eat, it is not to gratify the palate, but to keep in working order his Lord's instrument; does he think, it is not for the pleasure of thinking, but in order that his Lord's work may be the better done; he merges his life in the life he loves, thinks, works, acts, in union with that higher life, merging his smaller rill of being in the larger stream, and finding a deep joy in feeling himself part of the fuller life. So it is written: "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou

givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, O son of Kuntī, do thou that as an offering unto Me. Thus shalt thou be liberated from the bonds of action (yielding) good and evil fruits" (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, ix, 27, 28). Where fruits of action are not desired, where actions are done only as sacrifice, no karma is made by the actor, and he is not bound by them to the wheel of births and deaths.

Devotion cleanses the heart. Once again Shri Kṛṣṇa teaches us, and the words at first seem strange: "Even if the most sinful worship me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous." Why?—we naturally ask; and the answer comes: "Because he hath rightly resolved; *speedily he becometh dutiful*, and goeth to peace eternal" (*Ibid.*, 30, 31). In the higher world men are judged by motives not by actions, by inner attitude not by external signs. When a man feels devotion to the Supreme, he has turned his back on evil and has turned his face to the goal; he may stumble, stray, even fall, but his face is turned in the right direction, he is going homewards; he must needs become dutiful by the force of his devotion, for seeking union with his Beloved he will swiftly cast away everything that prevents the union; to Him who sees the end from the beginning he is righteous when his face is turned to righteousness; his love

will burn up in him the evil that veils from him the Being he adores, and produce in him the likeness that he worships. So sure is this action, so inviolable the law, that he is "accounted righteous". Of the two great classes of the self-seekers and the seekers of the Self, he has changed from the first into the second.

Devotion puts an end to pain. That which we do for the object of our love is done with joy, and pain is merged in gladness when it is endured for the sake of one we love. The mere earthly lover will gladly undergo hardships, perils, sufferings, to win approval from, or to gain something desirable for, his beloved. Why should not the one who has caught a glimpse of the beauty of the Self do joyfully all that brings him nearer to union, sacrifice ungrudgingly, nay, with delight, all that withholds him from the bridal of the inner life? For the sake of being with one we love, we readily endure inconvenience, sacrifice comfort, the joy of the presence of the loved one lending charm to the surmounting of all obstacles that separate. Thus devotion makes hard things easy, and painful things pleasant. For love is the world-chemist and transmutes all to gold.

Devotion gives peace. The heart at peace in the Self is at peace with all. The devotee sees the Self in all; all forms around him bear the

impress of the Beloved. How then can he hate or despise or repel any, when the Face he loves smiles at him behind every mask? "Sages look with equal eye on a Brāhmaṇa adorned with learning and humility, on a cow, an elephant, and even a dog and a dog-eater" (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, v, 18). No one, nothing, can be outside the heart of the devotee, since nothing is outside the embrace of his Lord. If we love the very objects touched by the one we love, how shall we not love all forms in which the Beloved is enshrined? A child in his play may draw over his laughing face a hideous mask, but the mother knows her darling is underneath; and when in the world-līlā the Lord is hidden under forms repulsive, His lovers are not repelled, but see only Him. There is no creature, moving or unmoving, that exists bereft of Him, and in the heart-chamber of the vilest sinner the Holiest abides.

Thus we return to our starting-point and learn to recognise the devotee by his aspect to his fellow-creatures. His abounding love, his tenderness, his compassion, his pity, his sympathy with all faiths and all ideals, these mark him out as a lover of the Lord of Love. It is told of Shri Rāmānujāchārya that a mantra was once given him by his Guru, and he asked what would happen if he told it to another: "Thou wilt

die," was the answer. "And what will happen to the one who hears it?" "He will be liberated." Then out ran the devotee of Shri Kṛṣṇa, and, flying to the top of a tower, he shouted out the manṭra to the crowded streets below, careless what happened to himself so that others should be set free from sin and sorrow. There is the typical devotee, there the lover transformed into the likeness of the Beloved.

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# ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. II

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## GURUS AND CHELAS

AN ARTICLE BY

E. T. STURDY

AND A REPLY BY

ANNIE BESANT

*(First edition January 1912)*

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THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

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# Gurus and Chelas

By E. T. STURDY

THE question of the relationship between the teacher and disciple in Eastern countries has occupied the minds of many Western Theosophists. This relationship will be better understood when it is explained that there is no one system or attitude maintained, and that the position varies with nearly every group of teachers and disciples.

The important questions which a disciple must solve are : (1) In regard to such and such a man, has he knowledge ? (2) Will he use it unselfishly ? (3) Will there be a personal affinity between him and me ? Then in some schools : (4) Can I have such trust in him as to surrender myself entirely into his hands and obey without any hesitation what I am told to do ? It is on account of this latter question that Western students have found difficulty in understanding how a man could come into association with his guru.

On the other hand the guru has questions to ask himself in regard to the chela : (1) What is his motive ? (2) What is his stage of knowledge ? (3) How will he use further knowledge ? (4) Is he to be trusted ?

The solution of these questions depends upon the development of the guru and whether he can see beyond the evidence which is given to the ordinary man, but even with the highest it is doubtful whether complete certainty can be made.

The whole question, then, resolves itself into one of mutual knowledge and trust. In the most reasonable and philosophical schools the association begins gradually. It commences by a disciple going to a teacher for advice and instruction upon some point. It may be a small affair and even a promise of secrecy is not taken from him. Then other philosophical doubts arise and he finds answers and explanations which are satisfactory to him in his guru. Meanwhile the life and character of the teacher come more and more under the observation of the disciple and we will suppose he finds these exemplary from his standpoint. He has so far found that the advice and instruction given him have always been sound ; thereby his confidence has increased. His guru has never shown that he had any motive other than a purely unselfish desire to benefit. By this his reverence and affection have grown. He has not asked idly, he has been an earnest seeker ; he has tried to act upon what he has been taught and what he has been able to accept. The teacher too has observed the chela, has studied his character and judged his trustworthiness. This process may have taken months or years. It cannot be hurried by "faith", each step has to be taken in the light of knowledge, not in the dark. If we take vast precautions in the entrusting of our

mere pelf, how much more should a man discern and proceed warily where so great a matter as the guidance of his very life is concerned.

At length the disciple has reached a point where he asks a question not to be solved from texts. Hitherto he has been helped in solving questions and doubts for which the teachings of various scriptures sufficed. Now, by his own perseverance and the guidance he has received, he is brought face to face with a question which comes under a different category. The guru has received this knowledge from *his* guru, under the condition of handing it down to worthy disciples only, and even then only under the same conditions under which he received it. He may or may not, at first, permit his disciples so to communicate it in their turn. After long experience they may do so. Hence arises the necessity of the first promise. It is merely one of secrecy. The guru has judged of his disciple and trusts him. He knows that long pledges are useless, for men will pledge themselves blindly to anything in their hunger to gratify their curiosity, or to gain what they suppose are valuable secrets for their own ends. The guru bases his actions on his knowledge and experience. The chela does likewise with such as he has. There is no mystery, no mere hypotheses, no straining of faith. And so time goes on, and the respect and love of the chela grow as he is able to see deeper and deeper into his guru's qualifications and character. He receives instruction as difficulties occur in his growth. No artificial pledges are

needed. *The conditions of holding such knowledge are taught him ; he accepts it under those conditions.* He does not receive it until he is judged fit. He knows when he fails that he brings upon himself inevitable results or kârmic punishment.

A man instinctively obeys him whom he has found always right and always disinterested. His obedience springs from the very bottom of his heart. Any pledge of obedience would be a false prop and a sacrilege. How can he disobey him whom he has come so much to love and reverence ? Great indeed must be the inducement before he does so and great indeed the disaster.

It is not difficult to understand the enthusiasm and love of a man who has beaten with weary brain and heart against the wall which bounds our ordinary knowledge, when he finds someone who gives him even a grain of the knowledge which goes beyond. He needs no artificial props to keep him to his faithfulness. And so, in his love and confidence, if he bursts into expression some day of his ever-living devotion to every expressed wish of his guru, it is because love has grown to such an extent within him that words come as a relief.

His guru accepts it, understanding how it has grown ; he never asked for it. It is love which has caused love to grow.

The Eternal Ātman is the true Initiator, the true Guru. Nothing must eventually come between the aspirant and That. In his guru he must worship That ; in himself That. His love and devotion must

not fall into a worship of form or feature or abode. His guru is to him an expression of truth higher than himself. It is as that he worships him; but he distinguishes between the vessel and its content.

And so progress, bounded and assured in every direction by acquired knowledge, is made.

The association between guru and chela does not cease with death, if both are sufficiently advanced. If the chela is not sufficiently advanced, he may unknowingly receive much from his guru, and may later learn to recognise its source.

Between the relationship as described and the lowest forms of fanatical devotion of the ignorant to those who know little, the gradations are innumerable. It is no uncommon thing to hear a man talk of his guru as if he were an omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent being, who could do anything for the chela that he chose, who is always guiding and watching over him at any time or anywhere. To this guru he has a pledge of absolute obedience and devotion. He seeks instruction upon every little detail of life which he carefully fulfils; or if he does not, he feels guilty of a sin, like the devotee of a personal God. He in the first place became a chela with very little previous knowledge of his guru. It was not in him then, or since, to have much discrimination. He thought he saw a very great Yogi who would lead him to Moksha, and he caught on at once. He may some day alter his opinion, in which case he breaks his pledge and goes elsewhere.

These pledges of absolute obedience and surrender to the will of a guru are fortunately rare. The chief condition is secrecy. *All the rest is part of the conditions of the knowledge given.* Such, for instance, as continence, abstinence from certain foods, and so on, the breaking of which conditions, once they are known, produce their own inevitable disasters. Hence a man may receive knowledge from one man for a time and afterwards go to another, and so to a third, fourth, fifth, etc. ; but he should remain under the tutelage of only one at a time, and where Yoga is being practised, this is especially necessary to prevent confusion, if for no other reason. Of course, where a guru can continue or wishes to continue teaching various things, the chela may never change ; but the guru himself may often refer his disciple to another guru.

In a country like India, where a large number of people are more or less intently bent upon the search for gurus, the cases of deception are constant and numerous ; and cases frequently occur where the rascal masquerading as a Yogi manages to obtain very considerable sums of money from people whose credulity or whose greed for acquiring knowledge outweighs their discrimination.

The belief in the possibility of Yoga and the capacity of man to rise by it to the noblest and most sublime conditions is so innate in the Indian mind, there is so much natural reverence in the people, that some centuries of imposture, which grows yearly more brazen-faced, have done little to decrease the reverence for the orange-red garment. This is also

partly to be accounted for by the undoubted fact that many men of blameless life and great knowledge still continue to be found in India, wandering as mendicants. It has become a custom for men to wander far and wide, through cities, and in wild places, hunting for a guru to guide and instruct them. Whether this was always so is much to be doubted. With the decline of the search for true knowledge in India, those in whose custody it is have withdrawn more and more from the outer life of the world, and the difficulty in finding these custodians, no doubt, serves as a fair test to prove the determination of the seeker, whether his motive be pure or selfish. Others, remembering the failure of multitudes of those who wandered and sought, make no such effort, believing either that the guru will find them when their time has come, or that there are no true Gurus, Yogīs, or Mahātmas now existing.

This latter class is an increasing one, and its growth is, no doubt, assisted by the Agnostic influence of Western civilisation and also by a consideration of the vast numbers of men of small learning, beggars and idlers who are indifferently called Sannyāsi, Bairāgi, Swāmi, Yogi, Mahātmā, Paramahansa, etc., as the speaker may consider fitting. To hear a man say that he met "several Mahātmas," at a fair or festival sounds strange to Western Theosophists who have used that term in the original sense to signify those who stand where humanity merges into Deity. The meaning of the narrator was that he had

met several men in the garb of ascetics who gave him a more or less favourable impression.

It will be seen from what has been said that chelaship, like every other wise institution, must be founded upon knowledge, experience and judgment. If these have to be exercised to the very highest degree where the chela comes into direct communication with his guru, whose knowledge and power, if he has any discrimination, will in time have become known to him, how much more is it imperative upon him to be ever watchful and discriminating in the case of those who, having little or no further knowledge than himself, claim to teach through being in communication with beings whose knowledge in regard to things here is, by the conception we have of them, almost infallible. He can but fall back upon his own reason and his own light as to how to act in any emergency that may arise; he can take no directions from a source he does not know, through an agency he sees little, or not at all, different from himself. He might as well have remained under the dominion of a priest, as tread such treacherous ground.

What infinite claims have been made to being in communication with God and with superior beings! Not by deliberate impostors, not by men and women of impure or selfish lives; often quite the reverse of this. Perhaps they did evil that good might come of it, leading their fellows upon the path of virtue as they saw it, thinking that through the motive and apparent result the means would be forgiven them. Dire illusion! A misrepresentation is only a bill drawn

. at a long date ; it will mature after the successes of having " raised the wind " have passed away. Truth cannot be juggled with or put off Who can know another's heart ? Who can know the springs of action in another, when he has not yet been able to sound the depths of good and evil within himself ?

Or again, the claimant to mediatorship, either with a God, an Angelic Being or a Mahātmā, for they are all the same as far as the recipient of messages and directions is concerned, may be utterly or partially deceived either by himself or by some masquerading intelligence external to himself.

The Christian who tells you how you will " find Christ " and the mediator who tells you how you will " find your Guru " differ somewhat in their methods, but both begin with " if," and entail a long list of ideal conditions ; and therefore so far as regards proof, both are equal.

The aspirant to chelaship must be tested in the world in every manner. Heavily indeed is he punished for lack of discrimination and for credulity, or for accepting claims and building on them without having probed these to the very bottom. Credulity is punished almost as heavily apparently as lack of heart, and on nothing more than this latter can kârmic blows fall heavier. And this is just ; for discrimination—straightforward understanding of everything, as far as we can go, and then resisting the temptation to go further and treat hypotheses as facts, or take statements as such, however enticing—is the very root from which knowledge springs.

# Gurus and Chelas

By ANNIE BESANT

THE importance of the subject taken up by Bro. Sturdy in the August (1893) number of *Lucifer* may well serve as excuse for a return to it, though from a somewhat different standpoint. It should be the advantage of a Theosophical magazine that different opinions can be put forward therein with perfect friendliness and courtesy, so that readers may have the advantage of seeing different sides of a subject, and may thus be enabled to form a more intelligent judgment than can be reached by seeing but one set of dogmatic assertions. The printing of an article with which the editor disagrees naturally implies the right of reply thereto, and the free air of frank discussion is, I think, healthier than the close atmosphere of unchallenged statement.

Bro. Sturdy very properly states in the beginning of his article that there is no one system adopted by all groups of teachers and disciples; and this is a point of some importance, for in the West people are apt to imagine that all Occult Schools stand on the same basis and employ the same

<sup>1</sup> In this reprint Samskr̥t terms for Teacher and Disciple are retained.

methods. This is not so. In India there are many Occult Schools, and the methods employed are as various as the teachers. Students, eager to acquire knowledge and seeking liberation from the cycle of rebirths, go to one or to another, and very probably may guide themselves in their choosing by some such process of questioning as that described by Bro. Sturdy; there is no question here of spiritual insight, it is a careful process of ratiocination. The key-note is struck in the sentence

“If we take vast precautions in the entrusting of our mere self, how much more should a man discern and proceed warily where so great a matter as the guidance of his very life is concerned.”

But the kind of precaution we take in selecting a trustee, or in choosing a tutor for our son, has nought in common—and here comes the fundamental difference between Bro. Sturdy and the large class both in the East and West whose views I am endeavouring to represent—with the finding of the Guru by the chela and the recognition by the latter of a *relationship that already exists*. If chelaship means nothing more than the finding of an intellectually advanced man, whose abilities and acquirements you carefully investigate, in order that he may train you intellectually and help you as a European professor helps his students, then I grant that the method proposed is quite in keeping with the object; it is supremely rational and cautious; every precaution is taken on both sides; the teacher scrutinises the pupil, the pupil scrutinises the teacher, and if the result be

mutually satisfactory, the relation is entered into. The bond is on the plane of intellect; the lower consciousness is the sole arbiter; and in this world of illusion every precaution must be taken against deception on either side.

But is this what is meant by the words Guru and chela? Is the most sacred and sublime of all human relationships nothing more than an intellectual bond, entered into with questions that appear to make the initial stage one of mutual suspicion, to be slowly removed by prolonged knowledge of each other in the physical life? Not so have I been taught, little as I know of these high matters, and the process described by Bro. Sturdy is the complete reversal of all that I have heard as to the methods of the school to which I was introduced by H. P. Blavatsky. For in that school the relationship between Guru and chela is a spiritual one, long before it descends to the plane of the intellect, and the tie has grown so close and strong ere the lower consciousness knows anything about it, that when, at last, the lower consciousness begins to realise it, all questionings become a laughable impossibility. It is not a question of men wandering through cities and in wild places, hunting for a guru to guide and instruct them.

The Guru and the chela have been long working on the spiritual plane of consciousness, the Guru directing, guiding, helping, the chela striving, learning, joyously submissive. On that plane no places are known; the body of the chela may be in any land. On that plane no arguments are needed; as the

spiritual vision strengthens, the chela sees. He could as soon question his Guru's knowledge, unselfishness, purity, as he could question the light of the sun ; his life on the spiritual plane is one of intense devotion to his Guru, to him the representative of spiritual law, of compassion, of divinity. For many a long year his training may proceed, and no gleam of what is passing may have reached the lower consciousness ; meanwhile he is living in that lower consciousness a pure, restrained, devoted life, aspiring ever towards his (to it) unknown Guru, whom one day he hopes to find. Then dimly he begins to sense, in his moments of highest meditation, a presence lofty and serene, strong and calm, just and compassionate. This dim sensing of something above him quickens his aspirations and stimulates his efforts. The lower consciousness, long purified, begins to respond more swiftly to the impulses of the higher ; the veil grows thinner between the lower and the higher, and the dim sensing passes into perfect sight and hearing. More and more the spiritual consciousness penetrates the intellectual, but it comes as master, not as servant, to command, not to submit itself to investigation. And it permeates the lower mind with its own knowledge, fills it with the certainties of its own experience, floods it with the radiance of its own light. Therefore, what the lower mind needs most to fit it for the reception of its spiritual guest is devotion, the longing to rise, the passion to yield itself in perfectest surrender. This done, it has done its part ;

it has opened all the windows, and the light streams in. Where in all this linked growth comes in the place for questionings of the Guru. "Has He knowledge? Will He use it unselfishly? Can I trust Him?" The chela may doubt himself, but never his Guru; he may foolishly despair of himself, but never of his Lord.

"But, then, you make nothing of the intellect," I hear one say; "you open the door to ignorance, to delusion, to superstition." The intellectual has its place in the chela's life, but the intellect may no more aspire to rule the Spirit or to lay down laws for its development, than the body may aspire to rule the intellect. Let the chela study intellectually, that he may be able to serve in the outer world, spreading the truths of Theosophy, removing mental perplexities, solving intellectual problems, scattering the darkness of ignorance. There let him be strong for intellectual conflict, a warrior for the soul's emancipation, strenuous, clear, virile, insistent. But when he enters the inner sanctuary and seeks the light of Spirit, he puts off his intellectual armour, he lays aside his weapons, he clothes himself in trust and devotion, he becomes in gentleness and submission as a little child. Thus have the Wise Ones taught in every century; thus have Their servants learned in every age; and thus I, though but the lowest of Their servants in the outermost court of the Gentiles, thus I, with ignorance-dimmed eyes, have seen.

ADYAR PAMPHLETS

No. 12

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# What Theosophy Does For Us

BY

C. W. LEADBEATER

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## What Theosophy Does for Us

THERE are certain great basic facts of life about which every thinking man desires accurate information—such facts as the existence and nature of God and His relation to man; we desire to know whence we came and whither we are going and what is the object of our existence. There are in the world many forms of religion, and each of these forms has propounded its own theories with regard to these matters, but these theories have differed widely, and each has bitterly assailed and ridiculed the beliefs of the others, so that the majority of men have come to think that upon all these points there is no certain information available.

So it comes to them as a surprise to find that there is a coherent and reasonable theory of the universe—a plain declaration of the great facts of nature, so far as they are known—a statement which is not to be accepted as a creed, but to be studied and investigated. Theosophy is such a statement—a definite science,

the result of many centuries of research and experiment, yet verified in our-day by many of its students, and verifiable by anyone who is willing to take the trouble to qualify himself for such enquiry.

Theosophy is not a religion, but it bears to the religions the same relation as did the ancient philosophies; it does not contradict any of them, but it explains and harmonises them all. It teaches that truth on all those important points of which we have spoken is attainable, and that there is a great body of knowledge about them already existing. It considers all the various religions as statements of that truth from different points of view, and for evidence of this it points to the fact that however much these faiths may seem to differ, its teachings explain them all. It shows us also the relation between religion and science—that they are not hostile to one another, as is usually supposed, but that, on the contrary, true religion should welcome science, as affording the means of proof for its teachings, while science may learn from religion the direction in which it may most usefully push its investigations. Theosophy is itself a science, and the greatest of all, for it is the Science of the Soul; it carries scientific methods into higher realms and applies them to the consideration of a vast field of facts which lie beyond the reach

of the physical senses. It solves for us many of the most difficult problems of life, and explains for us many mysteries, bringing them all together as parts of a connected scheme, and thus making them at once intelligible and rational.

From the investigations that have been made, there emerge three great basic truths, not metaphysical speculations, not pious opinions, but definite scientific facts, proved and examined over and over again by many students. These three truths are:

1. God exists, and He is good. He is the great life-giver who dwells within us and without us, and is undying and eternally beneficent. He is not heard, nor seen, nor touched, yet is perceived by the man who desires perception.

2. Man is immortal, and his future is one whose glory and splendour have no limit.

3. A Divine law of absolute justice rules the world, so that each man is in truth his own judge, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

Since the object of this paper is not to explain the scheme, but to describe its results in daily life, I may refer the reader, for further exposition of it, to *An Outline of Theosophy*.

When those three great basic truths and all the deductions which naturally follow from them

are thoroughly comprehended, they introduce so radical a change into man's life that it is not easy within reasonable compass to give any idea of its extent. The best that can be done is to mention a few leading ideas, leaving the reader to follow out the necessary ramifications for himself.

Finding that there is a Supreme Power which is directing the course of evolution and that He is all-wise and all-loving, we see that everything which exists within His scheme must be intended to further its progress. We realise that all things are working together for good, not only in the far distant future, but also now and here. The final attainment of unspeakable glory is an absolute certainty for every son of man, whatever may be his present condition. But that is by no means all; here and at this present moment he is on his way towards that glory; and all the circumstances surrounding him are intended to help and not to hinder him, if only they are rightly understood. It is sadly true that in the world there is much of evil and of sorrow and of suffering; yet, from the higher point of view we may see that, terrible though this be, it is only temporary and superficial, and is all being utilised as a factor in the progress.

While we look at it from its own level it is almost impossible to see this, but if we will

raise ourselves above it and look upon it with the eyes of the spirit we shall regard it as a whole, and thus we shall comprehend it. While we are looking from beneath at the underside of life, with our eyes fixed all the time upon some apparent evil, we can never gain a true grasp of its meaning; but if we rise above it to the higher planes of thought and of consciousness we can look down and understand it in its entirety. So we can see that in very truth all is well. Not only that all will be well in some remote future, but that even now in this moment in the midst of incessant strife and apparent evil, the mighty current of evolution is still flowing, and so all is well because all is moving on in perfect order towards the final goal.

Regard the roaring rapids of some rolling river, such as Niagara, and picture to yourself some tiny insect being swept down upon the surface of the water. Think how that water boils and foams, and surges and rushes this way and that as it dashes among the rugged rocks, and realise how impossible it would be for that tiny insect to see anything beyond the strife and the stress and the foam and the beating backwards and forwards; how to him, inevitably, that must seem the whole world, nothing but a confusion and a struggle and a buffeting, carrying him sometimes in one direction and sometimes in the other, without any ordered

progress or any comprehensible object. Yet we have only to rise above all that confusion, to stand upon the bank and look down upon it, and we observe that the whole body of water is moving steadily onwards, and that though, here and there, there are little eddies in which part of it, for the time, seems to be running backwards, in reality the very eddies themselves are all the time sweeping forwards with the rest.

Just so the philosopher who can raise his consciousness above the storm and stress of worldly life looking down upon it from above recognises what seems to us to be evil and notes how it is apparently pressing backward against the great stream of progress; but he also sees that the onward sweep of the Divine law of evolution bears the same relation to this superficial evil as does the tremendous torrent of Niagara to the fleckings of foam upon its surface. So while he sympathises deeply with all who suffer, he yet realises what will be the end of that suffering; and so for him despair or hopelessness is impossible. He applies this consideration to his own sorrows and troubles as well as to those of the world, and therefore one great result of his Theosophy is a perfect serenity—even more than that, a perpetual cheerfulness and joy.

For him there is an utter absence of worry, because in truth there is nothing left to worry

about, since he knows that all must be well. His higher science makes him a confirmed optimist, for it shows him that, whatever of evil there may be in any person or in any movement, it is of necessity temporary because it is opposed to the resistless stream of evolution; whereas, whatever is good in any person or any movement must necessarily be persistent and useful because it has behind it the omnipotence of that current, and therefore it must abide and it must prevail. Yet it must not for a moment be supposed that, because he is so fully assured of the final triumph of good, he remains careless of or unmoved by the evils which exist in the world around him. He knows that it is his duty to combat these to the utmost of his power because in doing this he is working upon the side of the great evolutionary force and is bringing nearer the time of its ultimate victory. None will be more active than he in labouring for the good, even though he is absolutely free from the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness which so often oppresses those who are striving to help their fellow-men.

Another most valuable result of Theosophical study is the absence of fear. Many people are constantly anxious or worried about something or other; they are fearing lest this or that should happen to them; lest this or that combination may fail, and so all the while they are in

a condition of unrest. The major part of their fear is wholly unnecessary, and most of the things feared never come to pass; but nevertheless the fact remains that large numbers of people are constantly giving themselves a great deal of unnecessary suffering in this way. Most serious of all for many is the fear of death. Quite a large number of people seem to have it always in their minds as an ever-haunting dread—a sword of Damocles ever hanging over their heads, ready to fall upon them at any moment.

The whole of that feeling is entirely swept away for the man who understands the Theosophical teaching. When we realise the great truth of reincarnation, when we know that we have often before laid aside physical bodies, then we shall see that death is no more to us than sleep; that just as sleep comes in between our days of work and gives us rest and refreshment, so between these days of labour here on earth which we call lives, there comes the long night of astral and of heavenly life to give us rest and refreshment and to help us on our way. To the Theosophist death is simply the laying aside for a time of this robe of flesh. He knows that it is his duty to preserve that bodily vesture as long as he can, to gain all the experience he can; but when the time comes for him to lay it down, he will do so thankfully,

because he knows that the next stage will be a very much pleasanter one than this. Thus he will have no fear of death, although he realises that he must live his life to the appointed end, because he is here for the purpose of progress, and that progress is the one truly momentous matter. See what a difference that makes in a man's conception of life; the object is not to earn so much money, not to obtain such and such a position; the one important thing, when we really comprehend it, is to carry out the Divine plan. For this we are here, and everything else should give way to it. It needs only that we shall understand the facts, and all fear at once ceases.

Another great point which we gain from our Theosophical teaching is that we have no longer any religious fears or worries or troubles. Many of our noblest and best people are constantly morbidly introspective, constantly fearing whether at the last they may not somehow be cast away; whether they may not fall short in some way, they scarcely understand how, of the demands which their faith makes upon them.

All that is swept aside when we see clearly that progress towards the highest is the Divine Will for us; that we cannot escape from that progress; that whatever comes in our way and whatever happens to us is meant to help us along that

line; that we ourselves are absolutely the only people that can delay our advance. When we really know this, what a difference it makes in the aspect of life! No longer do we trouble and fear about ourselves; we simply go on and do the duty which comes nearest, in the best way that we can, confident that if we do this, all will be well for us without our perpetually worrying.

True, we are told in the wise Greek proverb: "Know thyself." True, it is our business to know ourselves, and to discover our own weak points; but that also must be done according to reason and according to common-sense, and we must not be like those tiny children who, when they make a garden, are constantly pulling up their plants to see how much they are growing. That is exactly what so many good people are always doing—they are perpetually pulling themselves up by the roots to see how they are getting on, instead of being satisfied quietly to do their duty, and trying to help their fellows in the race, knowing that the great Divine Power behind will press them onward slowly and steadily and do for them all that can be done, so long as their faces are set steadfastly in the right direction, so long as they do all that they reasonably can.

Since we are thus all part of one great evolution and all very literally the children of one Father,

we see that the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity is no mere poetical conception, but a definite fact; not a dream of something which is to be in the dim distance of Utopia, but a condition existing here and now; and that is why the promotion, the realisation of that Universal Brotherhood is the first object of the Theosophical Society. And the certainty of this all-embracing fraternity gives us a wider outlook upon life and a broad impersonal point of view from which to regard everything. The ordinary man looks at everything from a personal point of view; the first thing and often the only thing that he thinks about is how a certain occurrence is going to affect him; if he thinks of its effect on the community at large it is only as an after-thought. Theosophy teaches us that the real interests of all are in truth identical, and that no man can ever make a real gain for himself at the cost of loss or suffering to someone else. Once more we must insist that this also is not taught as a pious belief, but is proved as a scientific fact.

Many a man is under the delusion that he gains much for himself when he cheats or injures another; he may even think that he can prove it by showing the shillings and pence which he has amassed in this nefarious manner. But in truth that man is taking a ludicrously partial view of the case and is leaving out of account

absolutely every factor which is of any permanent value. For there is something higher and greater in a man than the physical body, which is after all nothing but a vesture, and that which is of importance is not the effect of any given transaction upon the vesture, but upon the man who wears it; and it is found by investigation that the effect of any such fraudulent action upon the true man, the soul, is limiting and debasing to the last degree; so that through his ignorance of the facts, such a man is seriously hindering his own progress for the sake of a very small apparent acquisition.

Since humanity is literally a whole, nothing which injures one man can ever be really for the good of any other, for the harm done influences not only the doer but all those who are about him. So the student soon comes to know that there is no such thing as a private gain at another man's cost and that the only true advantage for him is that benefit which he shares with all. He sees also that any advance which he makes in the way of spiritual progress or development is something secured not for himself alone but for others, as we shall see later when we come to write on the subject of the power of thought.

If he gains knowledge and self-control he assuredly acquires much for himself, yet he takes nothing away from anyone else, but on the

contrary he helps and strengthens others. Cognisant as he is of the absolute spiritual unity of humanity, he knows that in this lower world also, in real truth, the interest of one can never be opposed to the interest of all, so that no true profit can be made by one man which is not made in the name and for the sake of all humanity; that one man's progress must be a lifting of the burden of all the others; that one man's advance in spiritual things means a very slight yet not imperceptible advance to humanity as a whole; and that everyone who bears sorrow and suffering nobly in his struggle towards the light is lifting a little of the heavy load of the sorrow and suffering of his brothers as well.

When he recognises this brotherhood, not merely as a hope cherished by despairing men, but as a definite fact following in scientific series from all other facts, when he sees this as an absolute certainty, his attitude towards all those around him naturally changes very greatly. It becomes a posture ever of helpfulness, ever of the deepest sympathy, for he sees that nothing which clashes with their higher interest can ever be the right thing for him to do or can ever be good for him in any way. And so it naturally follows that he becomes filled with the widest possible tolerance and charity. He cannot but be always tolerant, because his philosophy shows him that it

matters little what a man believes so long as he is a good man and true. Charitable also he must be, because his wider knowledge enables him to make allowance for many things which the ordinary man does not understand. The standard of the Theosophical student as to right and wrong is always higher than that of the less-instructed man; yet he is far gentler than the latter in his feeling towards the sinner, because he comprehends more of human nature. He realises how the sin appeared to the sinner at the moment of its commission, and so he makes more allowance than could possibly be made by the man who is ignorant of all this.

He goes further than tolerance, charity, sympathy; he feels positive love towards mankind, and that leads him to adopt a position of ever-watchful helpfulness. The child who deeply loves his mother is always watching for an opportunity of doing some little thing for her, something that he knows will please her or save her trouble. It is just that attitude of watching for an opportunity to help which the Theosophist adopts towards his fellows. He feels that every contact with others is for him an opportunity, and Theosophy brings him so much additional knowledge, that there is hardly any case in which it does not enable him to give advice or help.

Not that he is perpetually thrusting his opinions upon other people; on the contrary he observes that just this is one of the commonest of mistakes made by the uninstructed. If the ordinary man has a definite opinion of his own, whether it be upon matters religious, political, or social, or upon any of the other subjects of common discussion, he is for ever endeavouring to force that opinion upon others and to make them think exactly as he does. The Theosophist knows that all this is a very foolish waste of energy, and therefore he declines to argue. If anyone desires from him explanation or advice he is more than willing to give it; yet he has no sort of wish to convert anyone else to his own way of thinking.

In every relation of life this idea of helpfulness comes into play—not only with regard to our fellow-men, but also with regard to the vast animal kingdom which surrounds us. Units of this kingdom are often brought into very close relation with us, and this is for us an opportunity of doing something for them. We must remember that these animals also are our brothers, even though they may be younger brothers. It is the same great Divine Life which animates them, even though it be a later wave, a less developed outpouring of that life. Still, they are our brothers, and we owe a fraternal duty to them also—so to act and so to think that our

relation with them shall be always for their good and never for their harm.

Pre-eminently and above all else, Theosophy is a doctrine of common-sense. It puts before us, so far as we can know them, the facts about God and man and the relation between them; and then it instructs us to take these facts into account, and act in relation to them with ordinary reason and common-sense. This is all that it asks from any man as regards life. It suggests to him to regulate his life according to these laws of evolution which it has taught him. That is all, yet it means a great deal; for it gives the man a totally different standpoint, and a touchstone by which to try everything—his own thoughts and feelings, and his own actions first of all, and then those things which come before him in the world outside himself.

Always he applies this criterion, is the thing right or wrong? Does it help evolution or does it hinder it? If a thought or a feeling arises within himself, he may see at once by this test whether it is one that he ought to encourage. If it is for the greatest good of the greatest number, then all is well; if it may hinder or cause harm to any being in its progress, then it is evil and to be avoided. Exactly the same reasoning holds good if he is called upon to decide with regard to anything outside of himself.

If from that point of view the thing be a good thing, then he can conscientiously support it; if not, then it is not for him.

For the man who sees the truth in this way the question of personal interest does not come into the case at all, and he thinks simply of the good of evolution as a whole. This gives the man a definite foothold, a clear criterion, and removes from him the pain of indecision and hesitation. The Will of God is man's evolution; whatever therefore helps on that evolution must be good, whatever stands in the way of it and delays it, that thing must be wrong, even though it may have on its side all the weight of public opinion and of immemorial tradition. It is true that all about us we see infringements of the Divine Law taking place, yet we know that the law is far stronger than the petty wills of those who ignorantly disobey it; we know that in working along with the law we are certainly working for the future, and that, though at the passing moment our efforts may not be appreciated, the future will assuredly do us justice. Therefore we care little for the judgment of those who do not yet understand, since our knowledge of the governing laws enables us to work in the right direction.

Of no less importance are the practical deductions which flow from the second of the

great truths which we stated at the beginning of this paper; for to understand that the true man is the soul and not the body means an absolute revolution from the concepts of the majority of men around us. Our common expressions in every-day life show the most astounding practical materialism, for we constantly speak of 'my soul,' showing that we ordinarily regard the body as the self and the supposed soul as part of its property. Until we have entirely rid ourselves of this extraordinary delusion that the body is the man, it is quite impossible that we should at all appreciate the real facts of the case. A little investigation soon shows us that the body is only a vehicle by means of which the man manifests himself in connection with this particular type of gross matter out of which our visible world is built, and that the man himself has an existence quite apart from his body, capable of being carried on at a distance from it when it is living and entirely without it when it is dead.

This being so, it becomes evident at once that it is the life of the soul only which is really of moment, and that everything connected with the body must unhesitatingly be subordinated to those higher interests. The student knows that this earth-life is given to him for the purpose of progress and that that progress is the one really important

thing. We shall readily see what a difference this makes in his conception of life; the objects which men ordinarily put before themselves at once fade into the background, for he sees that whether he earns a certain amount of money or whether he obtains some particular position is a matter of comparatively little moment. The one vital thing, now that he understands life, is to carry out the Divine Plan, since it is for that reason that he is here, and everything else must give way to that. The real purpose of his life is the unfoldment of his powers as a soul, the development of his character. It is with this object only that he descends into physical life, in order that through the physical body he may gain experience which would not be possible to him on a higher plane, and may thus develope within himself permanent qualities.

Closer study will show him that he possesses other vehicles besides the physical body, and that through all of these he has lessons to learn; so that there must be development not only of the physical body, but also of the emotional nature, of the mind, and of the spiritual perceptions. The detailed method by which all this can be done will be found in our Theosophical literature; but half of the battle is already won when the man has realised the necessity for this effort and is determined to make it. In connection

with this he discovers three great points : 1. That nothing short of absolute perfection is expected of him in regard to this development. 2. That all power with regard to it is in his own hands. 3. That he has all eternity before him in which to attain this perfection, but that the sooner it is gained, the happier and more useful will he be.

He sees that what he has been in the habit of calling his life is nothing but a day at school, and that his physical body is merely a temporary vesture assumed for the purpose of learning through it. He knows at once that this purpose of learning the lesson is the only one of any real importance, and that the man who allows himself to be diverted from that purpose by any consideration whatever is acting with inconceivable stupidity. To him who thus grasps the truth, the life of the ordinary person devoted exclusively to physical objects, to the acquisition of wealth or fame, appears the merest child's play—a senseless sacrifice of all that is really worth having, for the sake of a few moments' gratification of the lower part of man's nature. The student "sets his affections on things above and not on things on the earth," not only because he sees this to be the right course of action, but because he realises very clearly the valuelessness of these things of earth. He always tries to take the

higher point of view, for he knows that the lower is utterly unreliable—that the lower desires and feelings gather round him like a dense fog and make it impossible for him to see anything clearly from that level. Whenever he finds a struggle going on within him—the “law of the members warring against the law of the mind,” as St. Paul puts it—he remembers that he himself is the higher, and that this, which is the lower, is not the real self, but merely an uncontrolled part of one of its vehicles. He identifies himself never with the lower, but always with the higher; he stands on its side, because he knows that the soul is the true man.

The great law of evolution is steadily pressing us on, sweeping us ever onward and upward along the course that all must take sooner or later. But it is obvious that the better we understand the Divine Law under which we are living, the easier and the more rapid will be our progress. No doubt even with the very best intentions and efforts we shall make many mistakes and shall often fall by the way; but we need not for this reason become the victims of despair. Although we may fail a thousand times on the way towards our goal, our reason for trying to reach it remains just as strong after the thousandth fall as it was at the beginning, so that it would not only be useless but very unwise and

very wrong to give way to despondency and hopelessness. The work has to be done, the goal has to be attained, and each man must always start from where he individually stands: it is futile for him to think that he will wait until he reaches some other position. Therefore, however often he may fail, he must still get up and go on again, for the road of progress has to be trodden.

The sooner we begin it the better for us; not only because it is far easier for us now than it will be if we leave the effort until later, but chiefly because, if we make the endeavour now and succeed in achieving some progress, if we rise thereby to some higher level, we are in a position to hold out a helping hand to those who have not reached even that step of the ladder which we have gained. In this way we may take a part, however humble it may be, in the great Divine work of evolution, every one of us, because each has his own position and his own opportunities. No matter how low his present status may be, yet there is someone still lower to whom he can hold out a helping hand, to whom he can be useful. The Theosophical teaching shows him that he has arrived at his present position only by a very slow process of growth, and so he cannot expect instantaneous attainment of perfection; but it also shows him how inevitable is the great law of cause and

effect, and he sees that when he once grasps the working of that law he can use it intelligently in regard to mental and moral development, just as on the physical plane we can employ for our own assistance those laws of nature the working of which we have learned to understand.

One of the most important practical results of a thorough comprehension of Theosophical truth is the entire change which it necessarily brings about in our attitude towards death. It is impossible to calculate the vast amount of utterly unnecessary sorrow and misery which mankind in the aggregate has suffered simply from its ignorance with regard to this one matter of death. There is among us a mass of false and foolish belief along this line which has worked untold evil in the past and is causing indescribable affliction in the present, and its complete eradication would be one of the greatest benefits that could be conferred upon the human race. This benefit Theosophy at once bestows upon those who, from their study of philosophy in past lives, find themselves able to accept it. It robs death forthwith of all its terror and much of its sorrow, and enables us to see it in its true proportions and to understand its place in the scheme of our evolution.

The man who understands what death is knows that there can be no need to fear it or to mourn over it, whether it comes to himself or

to those whom he loves. It has come to them all often before, so that there is nothing unfamiliar about it. He comprehends that life is continuous and that the loss of the physical body is nothing more than the casting aside of an outworn garment, which in no way changes the real man who is the wearer of the garment. He sees that death is simply a promotion from a life which is more than half physical to one which is wholly superior; so for himself he unfeignedly welcomes it, and even when it comes to those whom he loves, he recognises at once the advantage for them, even though he cannot but feel a pang of regret that he should be temporarily separated from them.

Further study shows that even this supposed separation is in fact only apparent and not real, for he learns that the so-called dead are near him still, and that he has only to cast off for a time his physical body in sleep in order to stand side by side with them as before. He sees clearly that the world is one, and that the same Divine laws rule the whole of it, whether it be visible or invisible to physical sight. Consequently he has no feeling of nervousness or strangeness in passing from one part of it to another, and no sort of uncertainty as to what he will find on the other side of the veil. The whole of the unseen world is so clearly and fully mapped-

out for him through the work of the Theosophical investigators that it is almost as well known to him as the physical life, and thus he is prepared to enter upon it without hesitation whenever it may be best for his evolution.

For full details of the various stages of this higher life we must refer our readers to the books specially devoted to this subject; it is sufficient here to say that the conditions into which the man passes are precisely those that he has made for himself. He who is intelligent and helpful, who understands the conditions of this non-physical existence, and takes the trouble to adapt himself to them and to make the most of them, finds open before him a splendid vista of opportunities both for acquiring fresh knowledge and for doing useful work. He discovers that life away from this dense body has a vividness and a brilliancy to which all earthly enjoyment is as nothing, and that through his clear knowledge and calm confidence the power of the endless life shines out upon all those around him. We have already said that what the uninstructed man usually calls his life is only one day in the real and wider life, and this brings us at once to the consideration of the great Theosophical doctrine of Reincarnation.

This is one which is very frequently misunderstood, and one of the most ordinary misconceptions

in connection with it is to confound it with the theory of the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies. Suffice it to say that no such retrogression is within the limits of possibility. Though it is true that the physical form of man has evolved from a lower kingdom, when once a human soul has come into existence he can never again fall back into that lower kingdom of nature, whatever mistakes he may make or however he may fail to take advantage of his opportunities. Since this day of life is a day at school, if a man is idle in the school of life he may need to take the same lesson over and over again before he has really learned it, but still on the whole progress is steady even though it may often be slow.

Those who have not studied it, and therefore do not know all that it means, often feel great objection to this doctrine of rebirth. I have no space here to set forth the many unanswerable arguments in its favour, but they are fully set forth in the second of our Theosophical Manuals by a far abler pen than mine. It should also be remembered that, like the rest of the teaching, this is not a hypothesis but a matter of direct knowledge for many of us.

Man gains very greatly, also, from obtaining an accurate idea of his place in the universe; his inherent self-conceit is wholesomely curbed

by the realisation of other and far grander evolutions, while at the same time he receives the very greatest encouragement from a definite certainty of the future that lies before him and the splendour of the goal which he will assuredly one day attain.

In what has already been written we have constantly had to take into consideration the existence of the third of our great truths, the mighty law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, or of the readjustment of equilibrium. If we wish to understand this great fundamental law, we must wholly dis sever it from the old ecclesiastical idea of reward or chastisement, and we must apprehend that in nature the punishment fits the crime with absolute accuracy and perfection because it is in fact part of it, because the result which follows the cause is itself part of that cause, although it is the unseen side of it. Under the operation of this far-seeing law man is what he has made himself and his surrounding circumstances are those which he himself has provided.

Novel though this idea has been to many, it should not be difficult of comprehension. We are all familiar with the suggestion that as we sow so shall we reap; it is merely a slight extension of that thought to suppose that as we are now reaping, whether it be in circumstance or in disposition, so have we sown in the remote past

of earlier lives. Indeed there is no other rational hypothesis by which the many inequalities which we see on all sides of 'us can be explained. For not only do surroundings and opportunities differ, but it is painfully obvious that men differ greatly in themselves and that some are in every conceivable way less evolved than others. It is impossible reasonably to account for this on any of the ordinary theories, without impugning the Divine justice, but if we once admit that souls are of different ages and therefore need different training we shall see that a flood of light is at once poured on the subject, and that its difficulties one by one disappear.

The gross and brutish man is simply a child-soul; where he stands now we ourselves stood once many ages ago; where we are now, there he will also stand after many more of these school-days which we call lives. And just as by looking back on the savage we may realise that which we were in the past, so by looking to the greatest and wisest of mankind may we realise what we shall be in the future. There have been and there yet are among men those who tower head and shoulders above their fellow-creatures in spiritual development; the Buddhas and the Christs, the great teachers and the philosophers—all these show us what one day we shall be, and so we see an unbroken chain of development, a

ladder of perfection rising steadily before us, and yet with human beings upon every step of it, so that we know that those steps are possible for us to climb; and it is just because of the unchangeableness of this great law of cause and effect that we are able to climb that ladder—because, since the law works always in the same way, we can depend upon it and we can use it, just as we use the laws of nature on the physical plane.

If physical laws were subject to capricious variation, it would be impossible for us to utilise them, since at any moment our machinery might fail us and we could have no certainty of any kind in connection with its work; but just because we can invariably rely upon the action of gravity or upon the expansion of a gas we feel reasonably certain in our employment of these natural forces. Just in the same way when we know with absolute assurance that the qualities which we possess now are the products of our own thought and desire in the past, we have also indubitable evidence that our thought and desire in the present must inevitably build for us new qualities in the future, and therefore that we can make ourselves precisely what we will.

Not immediately, for growth is slow and evil habits take long to eradicate; nevertheless, with utter certainty. When we see clearly that our present circumstances are the results of our actions

in the past we see also at the same time that we can so arrange our actions in the present as to mould our circumstances in the future, and thus we see that the whole of that future is entirely in our hands, subject only to unexhausted effects of what we have already done in the past. For neither thought nor action necessarily produces all its effects immediately. Sometimes it may be many years or even many lives before the full results become apparent; yet never does the slightest of them fail of final fulfilment. As the poet Longfellow has said:—

Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they  
grind exceeding small;

Though with patience stands He waiting, with  
exactness grinds He all.

From this great Law flow many things. If once one gains this idea of perfect justice, the troubles and sorrows of life take on quite a new aspect. In the case of the ordinary person quite a small trouble will often, because it is so close to him, loom up so large as to obscure the entire horizon for him, so that he is unable to see that the very sun is shining. Everything is altered for him; all life takes on a gloomy look, and he believes that he is the victim of some especial persecution, when all the time the trouble in reality may be a very small matter. Such an attitude is not in the least possible for

the student of Theosophy, for his knowledge brings to him a sense of perspective, and shows him that if suffering comes to him it comes because he has deserved it, as a consequence of actions which he has committed, of words which he has spoken, of thoughts to which he has given harbour in previous days or perhaps in earlier lives; and thus the whole idea of injustice as connected with misery is absolutely removed for him.

He comprehends that all affliction is of the nature of the payment of a debt, and therefore when he has to meet the troubles of life he takes them and uses them as a lesson because he understands why they have come, and is in reality glad of the opportunity which they give him to pay off something of his obligations, even though they may cause him much sorrow in the paying. Again and in yet another way does he take them as an opportunity, for he sees that there is, as it were, another side to them if he meets them in the right way. Far too often the ordinary man makes the most of his troubles; he anticipates them with fear, he intensifies them by grumbling, and he looks back upon them with regret and indignation.

The wise man spends no time in bearing prospective burdens, for he knows that nine-tenths of those things which people fear never come to them, and that even the few fears which are realised are never so serious in fact as they

appeared beforehand in fancy; and so when trouble comes to him he does not aggravate it by foolish repining, but sets himself to endure so much of it as is inevitable with patience and with fortitude. Not that he submits himself to it as a fatalist might, for he takes adverse circumstance always as an incentive to such self-development as may enable him to transcend it; and thus out of the result of long-past evil he brings forth the seed of future good. For in the very act of paying the outstanding debt he develops qualities of courage and resolution that will stand him in good stead through all the ages that are to come.

Though it is true, as we have already said, that the student of Theosophy should be distinguishable from the rest of the world by his perennial cheerfulness, his undaunted courage under difficulties, and his ready sympathy and helpfulness, yet he will be at the same time emphatically a man who takes life seriously, who realises that there is much for every one to do in the world, that there is no time to waste. Since he knows with such utter certainty that he not only makes his own destiny but may also gravely affect that of others around him, he perceives how weighty a responsibility attends the use of this power. He knows, for example, that thoughts are things, and that it is very easily possible to do

great harm or great good by their means. He knows that no man liveth to himself, for his every thought acts upon others as well; that the vibrations which he sends forth from his mind and from his emotional nature are reproducing themselves in the minds and the emotional natures of other men, and so that he is a source either of mental health or of mental ill to all with whom he comes in contact.

This at once imposes upon him a far higher code of social ethics than that which is known to the outer world, for he discovers that it is demanded of him to control not only his acts and his words but also his thoughts, since they may produce effects more serious and more far-reaching than their expression on the physical plane. For example, one of the commonest vices in this age of overwork and overstrain is irritability. Very many people are suffering from this, and many are aware of the failing and are struggling against it. Every time that a man yields himself to this feeling and gives way to an outburst of anger, he habituates himself to the vibrations which express this feeling, and so makes it a little easier to repeat them next time and a little harder to resist the next force from without which may impel him in that direction.

But he also radiates these vibrations all around him and they impinge upon the emotional natures of other men and tend, like all other vibrations,

to reproduce themselves. So that if some of those others be striving against this vice of irritability, his vibrations will stir them towards that emotion, and so make the task of control more difficult; and in this way by his own carelessness he adds to the burden which his brother has to bear. If on the other hand he makes a heroic effort and controls his own emotion, he sends out a vibration of serenity, of peace, and of harmony, which also tends to reproduce itself among his fellow-men, and makes it easier for every one of them to control himself in turn. Thus, even when a man is not in the least thinking of others, he inevitably affects them for good or for evil.

But in addition to this unconscious action of his thought upon others he may also employ it consciously for good; currents may be set in motion which will carry mental help and comfort to many a suffering friend, and in this way a whole new world of usefulness opens before the student. In this case, as in every other, knowledge is power and those who understand the law can use the law. Knowing what effects upon themselves and others will be produced by certain thoughts they can deliberately arrange that the results shall be good and not evil, for all who can think can help others, and all who can help others ought to help. Thus not only from selfish but from the far higher unselfish reasons the student

sees the necessity for gaining perfect control of the various parts of his nature, because only in that way can he progress and only in that way can he be thoroughly fitted to help others when the opportunity comes to him.

Thus he will range himself ever on the side of the higher rather than the lower thought, the nobler rather than the baser; his toleration will be perfect because he sees the good in all. He will deliberately take the optimistic rather than the pessimistic view of everything, the hopeful rather than the cynical, because he knows that to be fundamentally the true view, the evil in everything being, as we have said before, necessarily the impermanent part, since in the end only the good can endure. In this way by looking ever for the good in everything that he may endeavour to strengthen it, by striving always to help and never to hinder, he will become ever of greater use to his fellow-men and thus will become in his small way a co-worker with the splendid stream of evolution.

From what has already been written it will be seen that Theosophy is in no way unpractical or indefinite, but that on the contrary it has information to give which is of the greatest value to every human being, whether it be to the child or the parent, to the man of business or the artist, to the scientist, the poet, or the

philosopher. Wherever it has spread its uplifting force has been felt, and already it has done much noble work towards the realisation of the idea of Universal Brotherhood.

An examination of its principles will at once show that if they were generally accepted war between nation and nation or strife between class and class would become a ridiculous impossibility, and that its thorough comprehension could not but raise man's actions and thoughts to a plane far higher than at present. For this knowledge means not only power, but progress and unfoldment, and the spreading of the truth means the advancement of the world; and even if we take only the few leading points which have been mentioned in this little treatise we shall see that that must be so.

Surely all mankind would be better for the development of that serenity and joyousness which comes from the knowledge that all things are working together for good; for the entire absence of fear and worry; for the attainment of that wider outlook which shows us that no man can ever gain at the cost of another; for the widest tolerance and the deepest sympathy; for the attitude of universal helpfulness, towards the lower kingdoms as well as towards men; for the possession of a criterion by which all actions and all thoughts may be tried; for the knowledge that man is a

soul and not a body, and that therefore the life of the soul is his life, and that his work here is its development; that death is something not to be feared but to be understood; that there is no injustice in the world, since people are what they have made themselves in previous lives, and have what they have deserved to have; that therefore they are absolutely the makers of their own destiny, and that every word or thought or action is a stone in that edifice of the future; hence that they are responsible for their thoughts, and it is their duty to purify and to enrich them, not only in order that they may themselves approach perfection, but also that they may be more useful to their fellow-men.

Those who will study this Theosophical teaching will find, as we have found who are older students, that year after year it will grow more interesting and more fascinating, giving them more and more satisfaction for their reason as well as more perfect fulfilment and realisation of their higher aspirations. Those who examine it will never regret it; through all their future lives they will find reason to be thankful that they undertook the study of the magnificent and all-embracing Wisdom-Religion which in these modern days we call Theosophy.